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World magazine

GUIDE

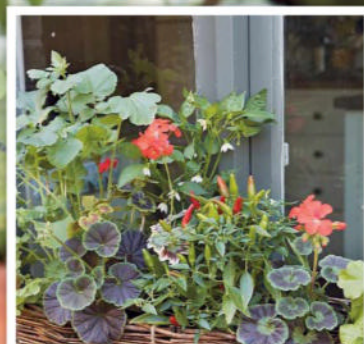
PLUS
2 seed
packs

Creative containers

RECIPE IDEAS FOR EVERY SEASON



✓ Growing made easy



✓ Small space solutions

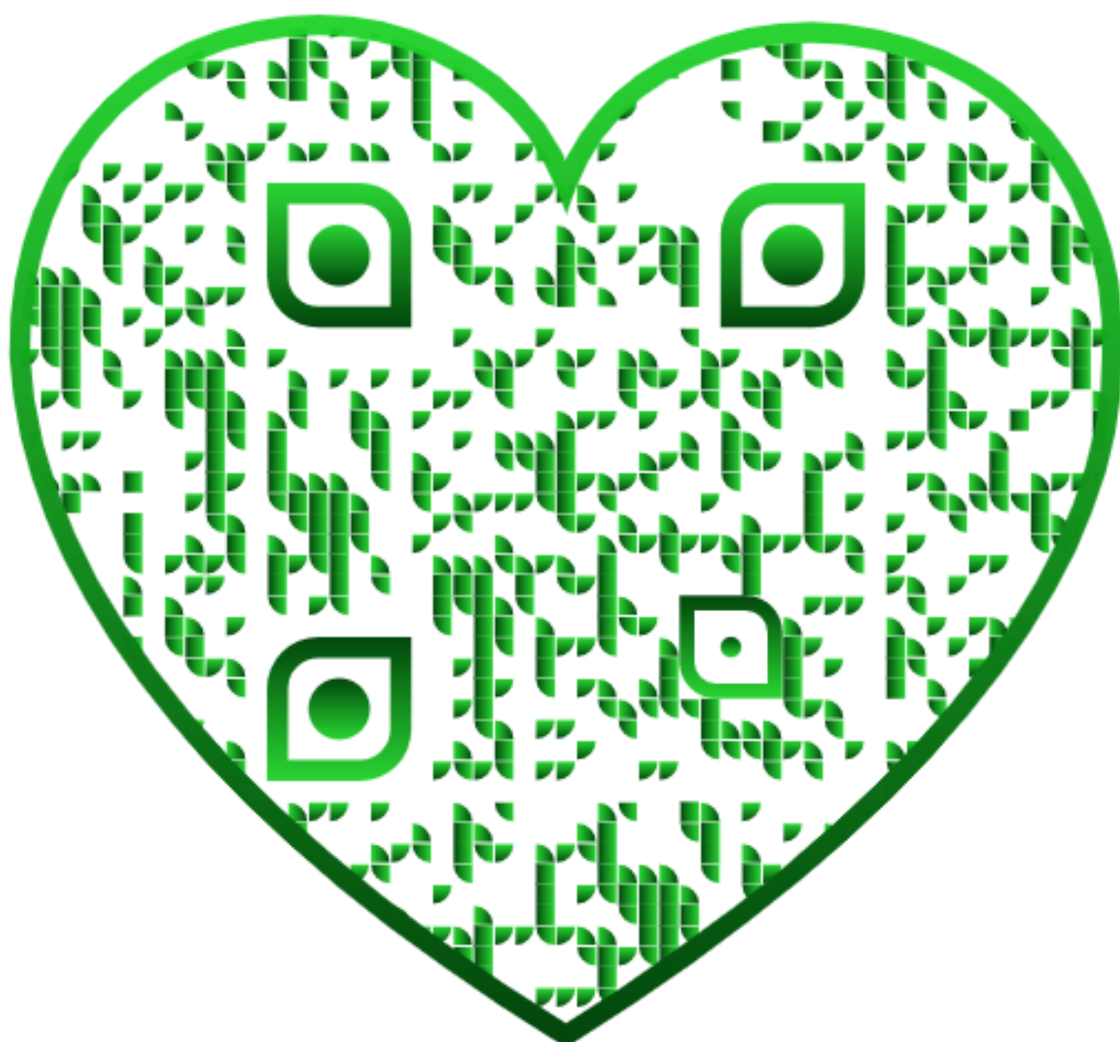


✓ Pots for a purpose

Reissued for...

2025

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Welcome



Do you know

what I love about growing in containers?

It's the perfect opportunity to mix, match and

experiment with plants, giving you the chance to be creative. Whether you like to have a few pots by your front door or need to grow a whole garden in containers, they really do provide the perfect solution for no end of garden situations.

On the following pages you'll find inspiring plant recipes for perfect pots every time. If you've got a shady spot that needs brightening up with beautiful blooms, or you want to grow delicious veg and herbs for tasty pickings, you'll find something to fit the bill. We've also got advice on how to grow more or less anything in a pot – even long-term residents like trees and shrubs. Plus, how to choose pots, select the right compost, and troubleshooting and maintenance tips. So, what are you waiting for? Take your containers to the next level. Happy gardening!

Kevin

Kevin Smith, Editor,
BBC Gardeners' World Magazine

We used

- ❶ Scarlet pelargonium x 1 ❷ Hot pink petunia x 3
❸ Trailing lobelia (mixed) x 3 ❹ Approx 30cm wicker hanging basket

Contents



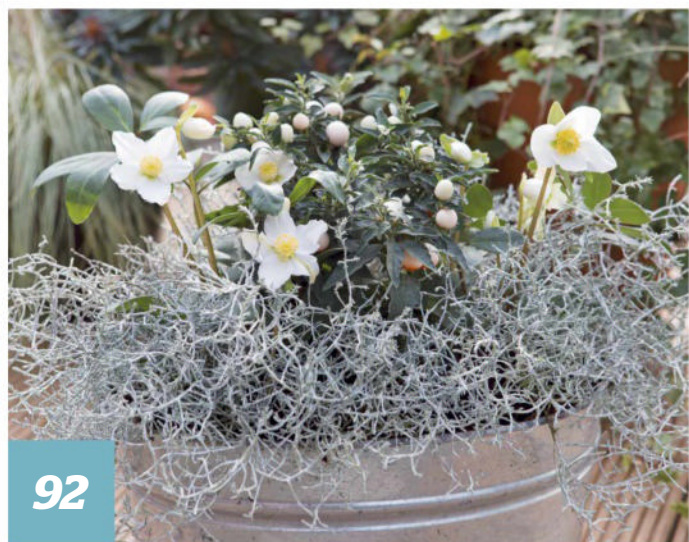
20 foolproof plants for pots

Discover the plants that are guaranteed to put on the perfect performance in your containers, window boxes and hanging baskets. Find a star plant in our list of top picks.



Spring containers

Transform your patio with containers that are full of spring cheer, from miniature narcissi to primulas and tulips. These easy planting ideas are the perfect start to the growing season.



Winter containers

Create a container that will bring your patio or garden to life when everything else has faded – whether it's a festive window box or a pot packed with bright berries and striking stems.



Edible containers

Find out how to get big harvests in small spaces in our edible section – from tiny tomatoes to climbing beans, there are plenty of fruits and vegetables that can be grown in containers.



42

Summer containers

Looking for container recipes that will provide long-lasting colour? Take a look at our ideas for great colour combinations and plants that will keep on flowering right through the summer.



74

Autumn containers

There's no need to miss out on autumn colour in a small garden – even one pot can add impact through the season. Discover what to plant for fiery shades and vibrant displays.



120

Container care

Get the best performance from your container displays with our top tips on looking after your plants. Find out everything you need to know, from preparation and planting to watering and pest control.

128

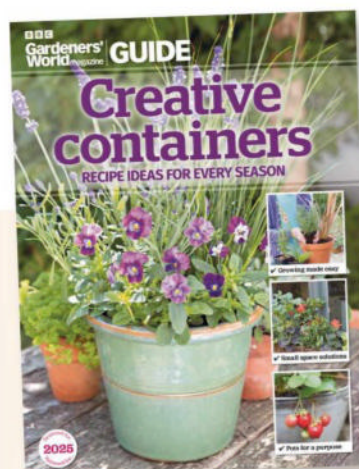
Where to buy

Perfect pots, plants, bulbs and seeds

129

Index

To all the plants featured throughout



COVER PHOTOS BY
SARAH CUTTLE, PAUL DEBOIS,



1 **Narcissus**

Plant some miniature daffodils for an easy way to bring spring cheer to your window boxes. Just remember to plant them in the autumn and you'll have a no-fuss display. Try varieties such as 'Tête-à-Tête' or 'Hawera'.

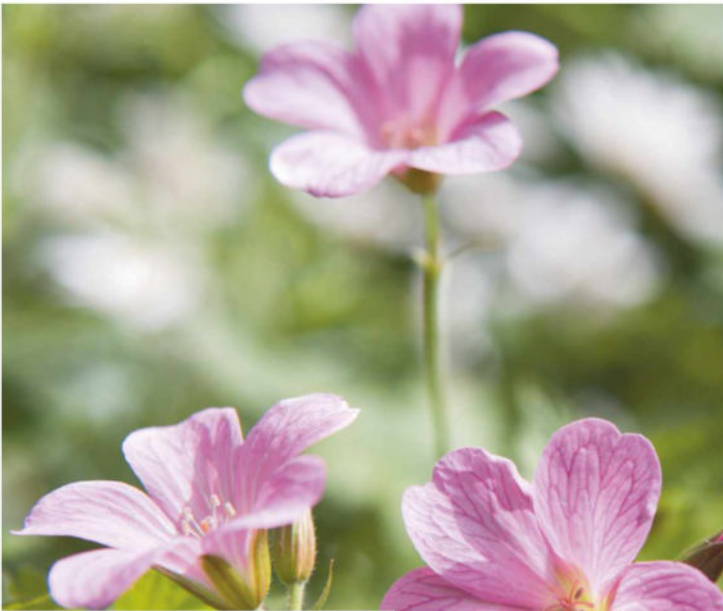
Best for Colour in small spaces

Flowers February to April

Height x Spread 20cm x 5cm

20 foolproof plants for pots

Container gardening is easy if you pick the right plants for your space. Once you know where you'll put your pots, choose plants that will thrive in that spot, whether it's shady or sunny, and look for ones that guarantee a good performance, from prolific flowerers and reliable stalwarts, to plants that make year-round impact.



2 Hardy geranium

Choose the right variety of geranium (cranesbill) and you'll have a trouble-free container plant that blooms right the way through early summer until autumn.

Best for Its long flowering season
Flowers May to September
H x S 60cm x 90cm



3 Skimmia

A reliable plant for providing either bright red berries (e.g. 'Nymans') or dark red or green flower buds to brighten up doorsteps and entrances in the winter months.

Best for Winter colour
Flowers April to May
H x S 1m x 1m



4 Heuchera

This low-maintenance plant is good for ground cover in containers with its high-impact foliage in a range of colours from lime greens and yellows through to deep purples.

Best for Underplanting
Flowers June to August
H x S 60cm x 60cm



5 Tulip

Mix and match your varieties and you'll have tulips in flower from March through to the end of May. They make perfect planting partners for spring bedding.

Best for Its spring show
Flowers March to May
H x S 50cm x 10cm



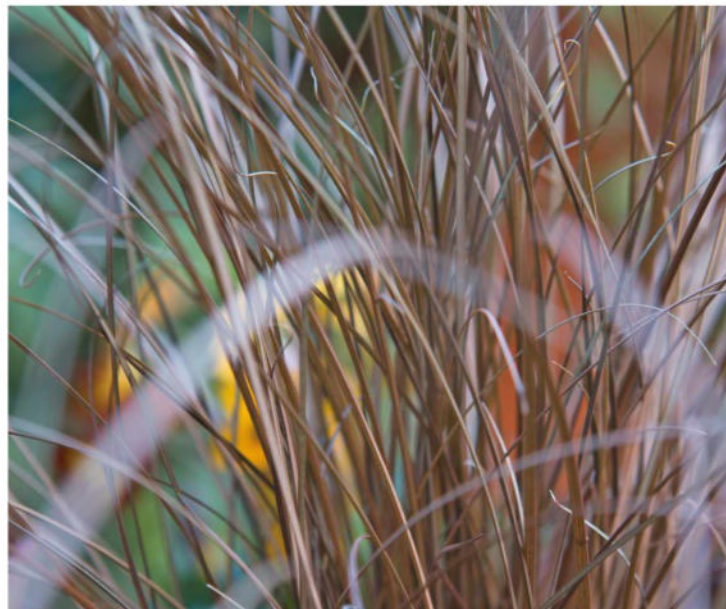
6 Variegated ivy

An easy-to-grow plant that's perfect for low-maintenance schemes. Try varieties such as 'Glacier' or 'White Wonder'. Keep moist during the winter months.

Best for Shade

Flowers October to December

H x S 2m x 2m



7 Carex

Varieties such as *C. comans* bronze-leaved and *C. testacea* are the ideal foil for flowering perennials or bedding in pots, with their attractive year-round foliage.

Best for Evergreen foliage

Flowers July to August

H x S 30-100cm x 60cm



8 Lavender

Choose a compact variety such as 'Hidcote' and place in a container near a sunny doorway or path to enjoy its scent on a summer day. Just give it a trim after flowering.

Best for Scent

Flowers July to September

H x S 60cm x 75cm



9 Hellebore

Hellebores make good partners for taller plants in containers, providing low-growing flowers that bring style to a winter pot, with foliage that adds year-round interest.

Best for Early elegant flowers

Flowers January to April

H x S 30cm x 45cm



10 Pelargonium

Bedding pelargoniums add bright colour over a long period. There is a huge range of colours and varieties, from elegant 'Lord Bute' to stalwart zonal types such as 'Octavia Hill'.

Best for Months of interest

Flowers May to November

H x S 40cm x 30cm



11 Begonia

These bedding plants are both reliable and versatile, and prolific flowerers right through summer. Perfect in hanging baskets with their large, blousy flowers.

Best for Non-stop flowers

Flowers May to the first frosts

H x S 50cm x 50cm



12 *Euonymus fortunei*

Tough evergreen shrubs such as *E. fortunei* 'Emerald 'n' Gold' provide year-round interest with white- or gold-edged leaves that make a good backdrop for more showy plants.

Best for Low-maintenance foliage
Flowers May to June
H x S 90cm x 90cm



13 Pansy

Pansies are an easy, reliable filler for hanging baskets and containers, adding bright colour for months on end. Available in a range of colours, from purple and pink to yellow.

Best for Long-flowering bedding
Flowers All year if warm
H x S 20cm x 15cm



14 Fuchsia

Fuchsias bloom well into October and there is a huge range to choose from, including compact varieties such as 'Tom Thumb' or 'Thalia'. They flower prolifically.

Best for Autumn colour
Flowers June to October
H x S 60cm x 60cm



15 Mexican feather grass

This ornamental grass will add movement and interest to containers, with the bonus of attractive fluffy flowerheads that sway in the breeze.

Best for Movement
Flowers June to October
H x S 60cm x 30cm



16 Petunia

These sun-loving plants have a huge list of attributes: long flowering, weather tolerant, great colours, no deadheading needed and scented to name a few.

Best for Summer colour
Flowers May to October
H x S 30cm x 30cm



17 Strawberry

Strawberries thrive in containers, and you'll be rewarded with lots of easy fruit year after year, especially if you make new plants from the runners.

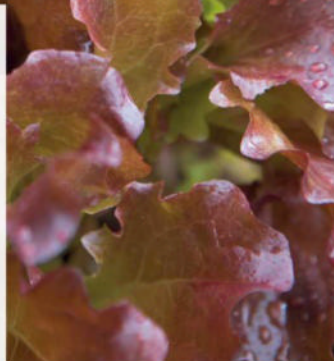
Best for Easy-to-grow fruit
Fruits June and July
H x S 30cm x 30cm



18 Salad leaves

Sow salad leaves, such as Lollo Rossa, successionally in containers for a pretty and productive display that you can harvest throughout the summer.

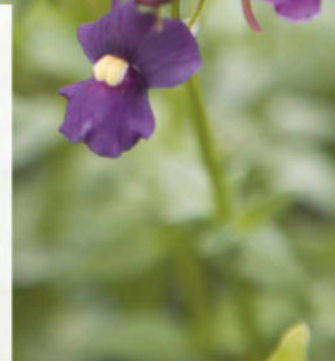
Best for Quick and easy crops
Leaves May to September
H x S 30cm x 30cm



19 Nemesia

Plant up your hanging baskets and window boxes with this vanilla-scented bedding plant that comes in a huge range of colours.

Best for Hanging baskets in a sunny spot
Flowers May to September
H x S 30cm x 30cm



20 Wallflower

Biennial wallflowers, at very little cost, bring shades of yellow, purple and red to containers in spring. Perennial 'Bowles's Mauve' blooms almost all year round.

Best for Long-lasting colour
Flowers March to November
H x S 30cm x 30cm





Spring

Spring containers should be bursting with bulbs, early-flowering perennials or even evergreen shrubs that will produce flowers to brighten the garden while the days are still cool. For a cheering splash of colour, nothing beats spring-flowering bulbs in pots. If you haven't had time to plant in autumn, buy bulbs in pots at the garden centre to plant for instant impact. They're easy to grow, low maintenance and guaranteed to put on a show.

When putting plants together choose flowers and foliage in complementary or contrasting shades for maximum impact. If you are planting in autumn, why not try planting bulbs in layers, topped with choice shrubs, perennials and bedding, known as 'lasagne planting' for a succession of blooms.

We used

- ❶ Tulip 'Yokohama' x 8 ❷ Carex 'Evergold' x 2
❸ Narcissus 'Tweety Bird' x 3 ❹ Erica arborea
'Albert's Gold' x 2 ❺ Phormium 'Yellow Wave' x 1
❻ Approx 30cm black polystyrene pot

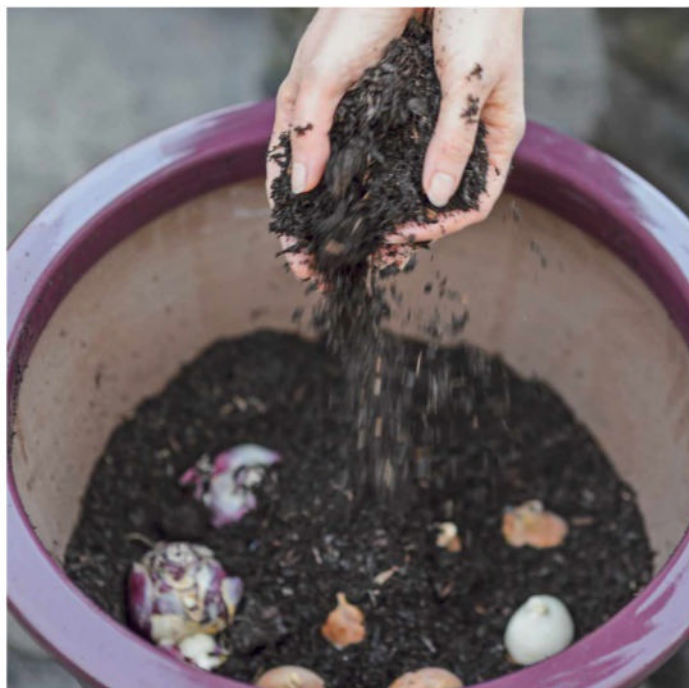
How to plant bulbs

Growing bulbs in containers is one of the easiest ways to bring spring colour into your garden. Simply plant a few in a pot, forget about them over winter and they'll emerge without fuss in the spring. To guarantee a spectacular

display, you need to plant your bulbs in the autumn – ideally, plant daffodils by the end of September and tulips in November. You can then add bedding plants or perennials to the pot in spring to complete the look.



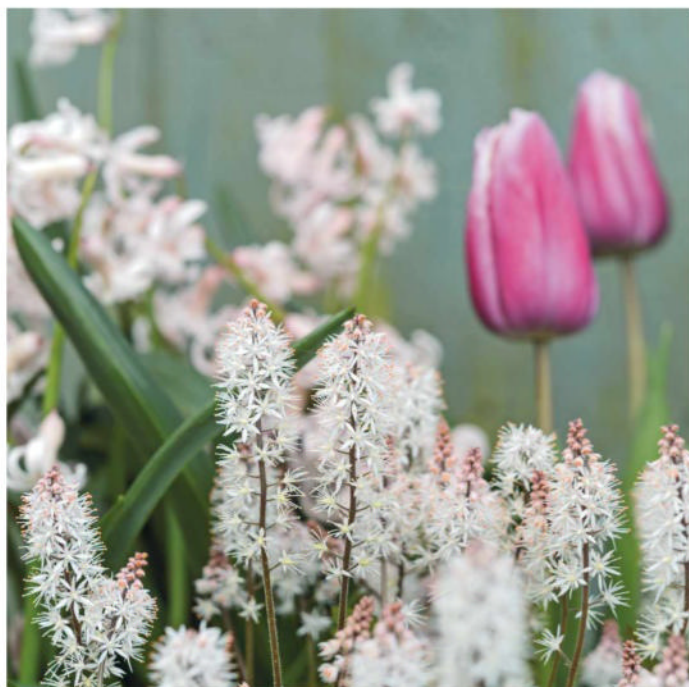
1 Plant bulbs at a depth of three times their height. Group together but leave a space to add spring-bought plants later on



2 Cover bulbs with multi-purpose compost with added grit to a few cms below the rim. Firm so that there are no air pockets.



3 Water well after planting and cover the container with wire to stop squirrels eating the bulbs. Watch for slugs in spring.



4 Fill gaps in spring with pretty perennials or bedding plants, and water. Feed with diluted liquid seaweed feed during flowering.



Doorstep scent

To get the ultimate spring display, plant your tulip or daffodil bulbs in the autumn and place in a spot in full sun or part shade. This mix is perfect by a doorway as the hyacinths and tiarella are scented. Remove the bulbs when they have finished flowering and plant in the ground, keeping the leaves intact, to encourage them to flower again the following year.

We used

- ❶ Hyacinth 'Pink Festival' x 4
- ❷ Tulip 'Holland Beauty' x 4
- ❸ Tiarella 'Spring Symphony' x 2
- ❹ Approx 42cm glazed pot



Perfect for patios

This bright, punchy fountain of lime-green euphorbia is sure to catch the attention of passersby, contrasting with the tall flowering stems of purple erysimum. They will both lure in the pollinators, providing vital nectar for months. Be sure to keep deadheading spent flowers to stop them going early to seed. After blooming, you can transplant these plants into your garden. Place the primulas around a deciduous tree or shrub, and plant the euphorbia and erysimum in a sunny border – they'll combine beautifully next year, too.

We used

- ❶ *Viola x wittrockiana* 'Frizzle Sizzle Yellow' x 4
- ❷ *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve' x 1
- ❸ *Euphorbia x martini* 'Ascot Rainbow' x 2
- ❹ *Primula veris* x 2
- ❺ *Euphorbia* 'Efanthia' x 1
- ❻ Approx. 50cm vintage zinc tub x 1



The golden hour

Glorious spring days are mirrored in the warmly coloured blooms and leaves of these plants. The calceolarias are a welcome new introduction for containers, although they need protection from frost. If that seems too much fuss, substitute orange ranunculus. Hybrid primroses and cowslips continue to push up fresh flower stems over many weeks and removing faded blooms will keep them looking tidy. When dismantling, all but the calceolaria may be transferred to a sunny border, although thymes will thrive in pots of free-draining compost for months. A position in full sun is preferable for these plants and they'll glow all the more on bright days. Cover the calceolarias with netting or fleece on cold nights.

We used

- ❶ *Calceolaria* 'Calynopsis Orange' x 1
- ❷ *Primula veris* 'Lime with Orange' x 2
- ❸ *Primula vulgaris* 'Dunbeg' x 1
- ❹ *Erysimum* 'Golden Jubilee' x 1
- ❺ *Thymus citriodorus* 'Variegata' x 1
- ❻ Approx 37cm terracotta pot

Pure and simple

If you're in doubt about creating a multi-coloured pot, try sticking to a single colour. And remember, there will nearly always be green present, too, which gives a great opportunity for bringing the whole arrangement together with foliage. Here, we've used Mexican feather grass (*Stipa tenuissima*), which contrasts with the bold *Ranunculus* 'Maché' and the sprightly *Saxifraga* 'White Pixie'. All of these plants, apart from the annual ranunculus, can be planted out once they've filled the pot, and placed around the garden in a sunny, free-draining spot. Think carefully about where to position this pot and try to place it where the early morning or late afternoon light will bathe it.

We used

- ❶ *Ranunculus* 'Maché White' x 1 ❷ *Stipa tenuissima* x 1
❸ *Saxifraga* 'White Pixie' x 4 ❹ 30cm x 40cm white planter





Windowsill winner

Don't miss out on the rainbow of florists' ranunculus in garden centres in early spring. These flower lollipops are the perfect size for a windowsill or porch, so you can enjoy them both indoors and out. Beef up the blooms with violas and a yellow-eyed drumstick primula. There are many different shades to choose from – don't worry if you can't find the exact varieties we used – just pick what's looking good.

We used

- ① *Ranunculus asiaticus* hybrids x 3
- ② *Primula denticulata* x 2
- ③ Violas in mixed colours x 8
- ④ 65cm long wicker windowbox

Brighten the shade

Revelling in a shady corner, this quintet of hardy perennials bears delicate flowers and attractive leaves. Ideally, site this container in dappled light where the airy blooms can be enchantingly illuminated by shafts of spring sunshine. All will gradually spread, so can be split and planted in the garden or into other pots.

We used

- ❶ *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' x 2
- ❷ *Saxifraga umbrosa* x 1
- ❸ *Epimedium grandiflorum* 'Lilafee' x 1
- ❹ *Hosta* 'Blue Mouse Ears' x 1
- ❺ *Ajuga reptans* 'Burgundy Glow' x 1
- ❻ 43cm x 31cm oval metal tub





A tasty treat

You can't beat a splash of yellow for a full-on reminder that spring is in the air. Here, golden blooms and lemony-lime foliage combine to create a container that's full of zesty spring cheer. The native cowslips (primulas) add a hint of wildflower meadow, while the lime sage can be used in cooking.

We used

- ❶ *Primula veris* x 2
- ❷ *Salvia officinalis* 'Icterina' x 1
- ❸ Yellow violas x 3
- ❹ *Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea' x 1
- ❺ Approx 30cm terracotta pot



Full of fragrance

Hyacinths pack a real punch, with large colourful flowerheads that waft perfume across the garden. Yet they're inexpensive and widely available now, ready to burst into fragrant bloom. They're perfect as the centrepiece of this pretty display, combined with evergreen leaves, variegated thyme and early scented pinks. Pack them in closely to create a bouquet effect, then transplant into a border when they eventually outgrow the pot.

We used

- ❶ Hyacinth 'Pink Pearl' x 3 ❷ Skimmia 'Magic Marlot' x 1
❸ Dianthus 'Tiny Rubies' x 1 ❹ Heuchera 'Frosted Violet' x 1
❺ Thymus 'Silver Posie' x 1 ❻ Approx 30cm ceramic pot



Perfect for smaller pots

Grasses and bulbs are made for each other, reminiscent of wild hedgerows where they bob about in the slightest breeze, making everything feel fresh and spring-like. Mexican feather grass is just the right size for a small pot, while the aqua-blue pansies and grape hyacinths add a splash of colour.

We used

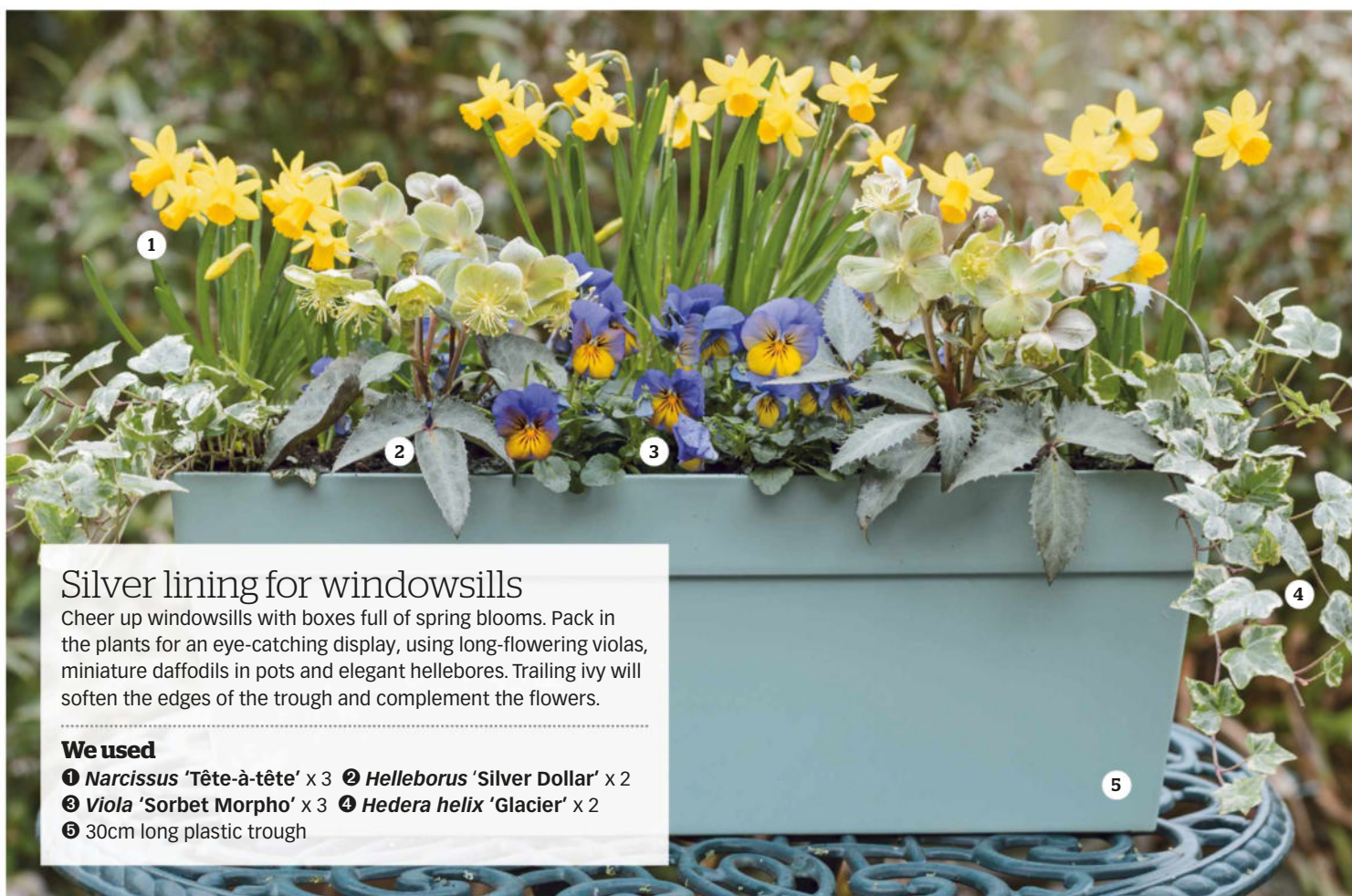
- ❶ Mexican feather grass (*Stipa tenuissima*) x 1
- ❷ *Muscari* 'Blue Magic' x 3
- ❸ Yellow and purple pansies x 5
- ❹ *Euonymus japonicus* 'Microphyllus Variegatus' x 1
- ❺ 40cm long galvanised metal trough

Brimming over

Trailing campanula and variegated ivy will soften the edges of this hanging basket. The campanula and violas are long-flowering and will provide a striking display for months alongside the elegant ranunculus.

We used

- ❶ *Ranunculus asiaticus* hybrids x 1
- ❷ Purple and yellow violas x 2
- ❸ *Campanula portenschlagiana* x 1
- ❹ Variegated ivy x 2
- ❺ 30cm willow hanging basket



Silver lining for windowsills

Cheer up windowsills with boxes full of spring blooms. Pack in the plants for an eye-catching display, using long-flowering violas, miniature daffodils in pots and elegant hellebores. Trailing ivy will soften the edges of the trough and complement the flowers.

We used

- ❶ *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-tête' x 3
- ❷ *Helleborus* 'Silver Dollar' x 2
- ❸ *Viola* 'Sorbet Morpho' x 3
- ❹ *Hedera helix* 'Glacier' x 2
- ❺ 30cm long plastic trough



Contemporary contrasts

Lime green and purple are at opposite sides of the colour wheel, so a vibrant euphorbia is perfect as a contrast to *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve'. *Euphorbia epithymoides* is well-suited to a container as it's compact, while the heuchera, which is useful for underplanting, adds to the zingy feel, creating a contemporary look.

We used

- ❶ *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve' x 1
- ❷ *Heuchera* 'Lime Rickey' x 1
- ❸ *Euphorbia epithymoides* x 1
- ❹ Approx 40cm square terracotta pot



Timeless terracotta

There's no doubt that the plants are what make this time of year unique – so bulbs have to be the centerpiece in this container. If you didn't plant any last autumn, most garden centres sell them in pots, ready to burst into flower. Once they've finished flowering in this pot, and the foliage has gone over, replant them in the ground and they should come back year after year. Adding aromatic herbs gives off delicious scents and they're useful in the kitchen. Mediterranean herbs have evolved in rocky terrain with little root space, which makes them a great choice for containers as they can live for almost as many years in a pot as they can in the ground.

We used

❶ Iris 'Pixie' x 4 pots ❷ *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-tête' x 4 pots ❸ Thyme x 2 ❹ *Arum italicum* 'Marmoratum' x 3 ❺ *Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Majorca Pink' x 1 ❻ Approx 35cm x 54cm terracotta pot



Outstanding in shade

The white and yellow flowers of the daffodils are mirrored by the violas. Add pale-coloured double primulas for a subtle spring pot that will glow in a shady place. The grey-green painted planter completes the look for a combination that flowers March-May and will thrive in full sun or partial shade. Deadhead the violas and primulas as they fade to encourage a fresh flush of blooms.

We used

- ❶ *Narcissus 'Minnow'* x 8 ❷ White & yellow pansies x 5
 ❸ *Primula 'Dawn Ansell'* x 2 ❹ Approx 45cm painted wood barrel



Fresh and fragrant

The snowflake *Leucojum aestivum* gives height to the display, but its leaves and stems can look sparse, so here the bellis daisy provides cover at the base. The contrast between the whites and bright blue hyacinths provides a fresh and classic spring colour combination. You can plant the bulbs in autumn and then add the bellis in spring, or buy everything in flower in spring.

We used

❶ Hyacinth 'Blue Pearl' x 5

❷ *Leucojum aestivum*

'Gravetye Giant' x 4

❸ White bellis daisies x 5

❹ Approx 35cm bleached wood pot



Colour coded

Hanging baskets offer an attractive way of displaying plants at a comfortable level. This bright collection is equally suited to a container that's standing on the ground, but here the cheery-faced violas and starry-flowered periwinkles look you in the eye. If you can't find small periwinkle or sweet flag plants to distribute around the basket, buy larger specimens and carefully split them. Both are evergreen perennials so can be kept containers or planted out in early summer. By regularly removing spent blooms and trimming them if they become leggy, violas will continue blooming well into June. Hang in a sunny or lightly shaded spot that is protected from cold winds.

We used

- ❶ *Vinca minor* 'Illumination' x 3
- ❷ *Viola cornuta* 'Antique Shades' x 6
- ❸ *Viola cornuta* 'Deltini Honey Bee' x 6
- ❹ *Acorus gramineus* 'Ōgon' x 3
- ❺ Approx 36cm rattan hanging basket



A bonus for bees

The forget-me-nots hide the leaves of the double muscari, which can look untidy, while their yellow centres are picked out by the bright yellow tulips. And bees love muscari. You can plant young forget-me-not plants in the autumn at the same time as the bulbs, then wait for your pot to explode with flowers.

We used

- ❶ *Muscari armeniacum* 'Blue Spike' x 9
- ❷ Yellow tulips x 9
- ❸ Forget-me-nots x 3
- ❹ Approx 32cm wooden barrel



Patio favourites

Wallflowers and euphorbias will add a boost of colour to pots for weeks on end. Combined with spring-flowering forget-me-nots and set off with the calming green of ivy, this vibrant mix will perk up a patio in partial shade from April through to midsummer.

We used

- ❶ *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* x 1
- ❷ Orange wallflowers x 1
- ❸ Forget-me-nots x 2
- ❹ Ivy 'Teardrop' x 3
- ❺ Approx 45cm square metal pot

Window dressing

Blue and yellow are a classic spring colour combination. This cheery mix of bright wallflowers and blue muscari can't fail to make an impact on a windowsill. The corydalis adds clusters of blue flowers for weeks on end, while the carex provides an attractive foil to all the flowers with its vibrant foliage. Mulch with moss for a fresh spring finish.

We used

- ❶ *Erysimum* 'Walberton's Fragrant Star' x 2
- ❷ *Carex elata* 'Aurea' x 1
- ❸ *Corydalis flexuosa* 'Purple Leaf' x 2
- ❹ Grape hyacinths x 10
- ❺ 40cm long window box

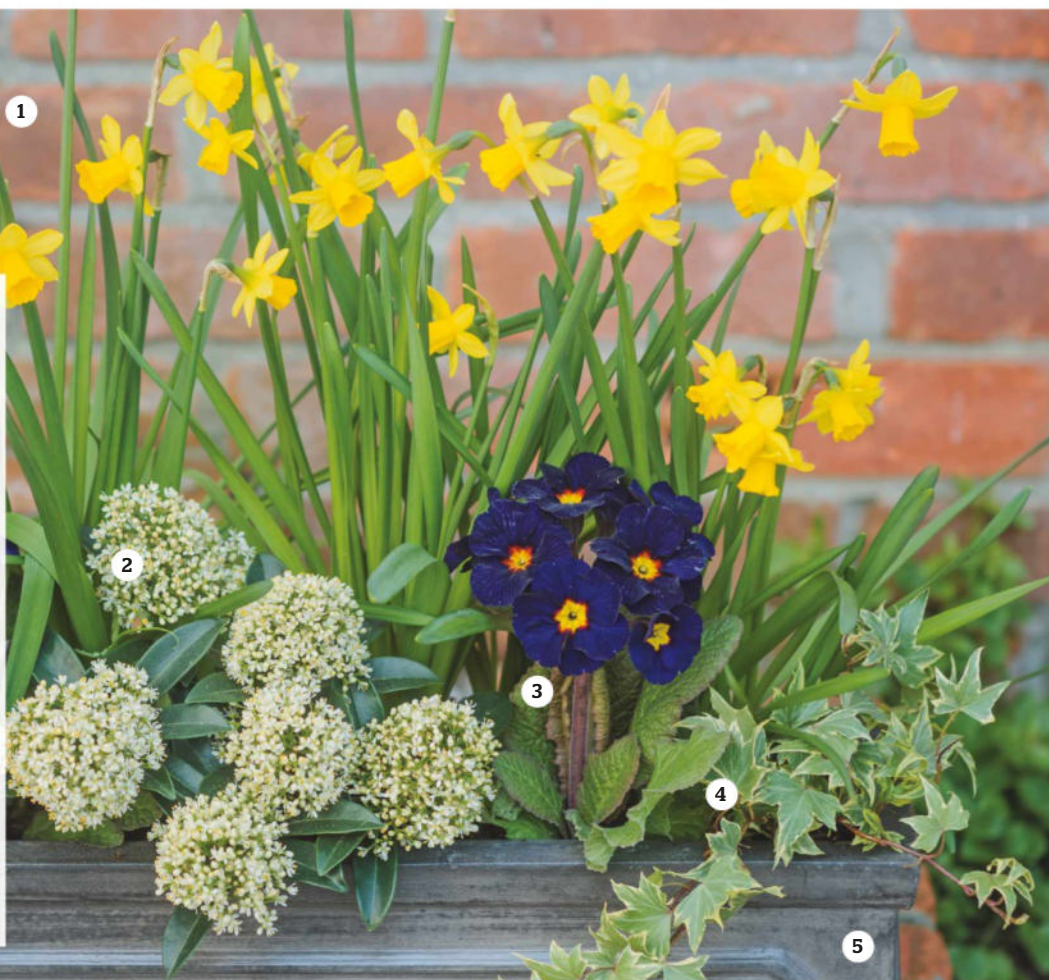


Food for early bees

Dainty 'Tête-à-tête' daffodils are deservedly popular. Small, multi-headed, bright yellow and very reliable, they're ideal for pots. Combined with a splash of purple polyanthus and the evergreen foliage of ivy and skimmia in a lead-look container, they make an unfussy yet elegant display. The colours may be understated, but the scent from the skimmia flowers adds extra interest and provides valuable nectar for early bees.

We used

- ❶ *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-tête' x 3
- ❷ *Skimmia* 'Finchy' x 1
- ❸ Purple polyanthus x 2
- ❹ Variegated ivy x 2
- ❺ 45cm long fibre clay trough





Immediate impact

Don't worry if you missed the bulb-planting window in autumn. Here's an easy way to get instant impact for spring. Buy miniature narcissus in pots and plant up with attractive early-flowering shrubs such as *Viburnum tinus*, which can then be planted out in the garden once the bulbs have finished

We used

- ❶ *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-tête' x 5 ❷ *Viburnum tinus* 'Eve Price' x 1
❸ Fern x 1 ❹ White crocus x 3 ❺ Approx 30cm metal pot



Shades of pale

Housed in an elegant, verdigris-effect pot, this attention-seeking planting comprises a host of long-flowering, mostly perennial treasures. A clear gradation in height achieves a pleasing balance, with the tall ranunculus being the showy centrepiece. Restricting the palette to mainly shades of pink results in a sophisticated look and all these pastels give the pot a sense of serenity. Planted to weave around and drape over the pot's edge, the pale anemones, with their daisy-like blooms, shoot out in all directions. Choose a sheltered but bright spot outdoors where the anemones will open out in spring sunshine.

We used

- ❶ *Ranunculus* 'Bloomingdale Blue Bi-colour' x 3
- ❷ *Primula* 'Blue Lace Mary' x 2
- ❸ *Saxifraga* 'Apple Blossom' x 1
- ❹ *Anemone blanda* 'Charmer' x 3
- ❺ Fibre clay planter



Sophisticated showstopper

For a cool and sophisticated display, opt for silver and white. Helichrysum and senecio provide a splash of sparkling silver through winter before the bulbs emerge in spring. Small white muscari add interest at the base.

We used

❶ *Narcissus* 'Misty Glen' x 5 ❷ *Senecio cineraria* 'Silver Dust' x 1 ❸ *Helichrysum italicum* x 1 ❹ *Muscari* 'White Magic' x 6 ❺ Approx 25cm blue glazed pot

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Low maintenance

If you often forget to water your containers, drought-tolerant, easy-care alpine plants are for you. This group of low, cushion-forming plants forms a charming miniature landscape, small enough to sit on a table where the intricate detail can be easily enjoyed. Trim the phloxes and saxifrage after flowering to leave green pools of pleasingly patable foliage.

We used

- ❶ *Phlox subulata* 'Early Spring Lavender' x 1
- ❷ *Phlox douglasii* 'Crackerjack' x 1
- ❸ *Saxifraga* 'Apple Blossom' x 1
- ❹ *Scleranthus biflorus* x 1
- ❺ *Thymus* 'Bressingham' x 1
- ❻ *Sempervivum arachnoideum* 'Rubrum' x 1
- ❼ Approx 25cm zinc bowl





Cottage-garden favourite

A pretty combination that mixes culinary herbs with beautiful flowers, some edible – perfect for kitchen pickings and brightening up the back doorstep. The rosemary gives height to the centre of the display, while the thyme and flowers soften the edges of the pot. The blooms are in complementary shades for a coordinated feel that has cottage-garden appeal.

We used

- ① Rosemary x 1 pot ② Garden pinks x 2 ③ Purple violas x 3
④ Thyme x 1 pot ⑤ Approx 25cm terracotta pot

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Summer

Summer is the perfect time to plant up containers with bedding, long-flowering perennials and shrubs that will fill your patio with colour for months on end. Planting hanging baskets, window boxes and pots is easy with our container recipes – there are so many ways to transform an entrance or patio.

If you're looking for simple options, there are plenty of plants such as lavender or flowering shrubs that will make a focal point on their own, while floriferous bedding and stalwart perennials such as *erysimum* or hardy geraniums will keep blooming for weeks if your pots are kept well watered. For pots placed next to doorways, look for scented plants and include a mix of upright and trailing varieties to soften the edge of the pots.

We used

- ① *Phormium* 'Black Adder' x 1
- ② *Bidens* 'Hawaiian Flare Orange Drop' x 3
- ③ *Nasturtium* 'Jewel Cherry Rose' x 3
- ④ Chocolate cosmos x 3
- ⑤ *Verbena rigida* x 4
- ⑥ Approx 70cm terracotta pot

How to plant baskets

Preparation is key to creating perfect baskets. Take the time to plant it up right and you'll be rewarded with months of flowers to brighten your garden or front entrance. Hanging baskets need to be watered regularly, so it's

important to look for ways of retaining moisture - either buy a lined basket, or line it yourself with an old compost bag. For the best displays, feed your plants and deadhead frequently to keep the blooms coming.



1 Cut holes in the plastic liner to allow easy drainage, and if there's no in-built water reservoir, pop a small plastic saucer in the bottom.



2 Fill with multi-purpose compost mixed with perlite to improve aeration. Add slow-release fertiliser granules when planting.



3 Position tall plants in the centre of the basket and trailing plants around the edges as well as in any planting holes in the sides.



4 Water once a day, or twice if it's hot or windy, and make sure the compost is completely soaked through.



Basking in the sun

This combination mixes textures and colours for dramatic effect. The subtle blue-grey foliage of the festuca and the lotus provides the backdrop to the exotic orange and red flowers. Plant the festuca in the garden or a pot in autumn. Trim the trailing stems of the lotus, pot it up and keep in a frost-free place over winter for next year.

We used

- ❶ *Festuca glauca* x 2
- ❷ *Lotus* 'Fire Vine' x 3
- ❸ *Begonia* 'Glowing Embers' x 1
- ❹ *Begonia* 'Santa Cruz Sunset' x 1
- ❺ Approx 35cm willow basket

Standing tall

Combine white, blue and lavender in a slate-grey pot to create a timeless and elegant display. The lycianthes makes a perfect standard specimen, while the felicia holds its flowers above a haze of lobelia. This pot will brighten a lightly shaded corner or bring a cool touch to a sunny spot.

We used

- ❶ *Lycianthes rantonnetii* x 1
- ❷ *Felicia amelloides* x 3
- ❸ *Lobelia erinus* 'Sapphire' x 3
- ❹ *Impatiens* 'Accent White' x 2
- ❺ *Bacopa* 'Blutopia' x 3
- ❻ Approx 40cm faux-lead planter





Go wild for pollinators

This pot is great for supporting wildlife and is at its peak from June to September. Pretty, nectar-rich plants will attract bees, butterflies and other beneficial insects. Other flowers you could try include sedum, cornflowers, marigolds and borage. A log with holes drilled into it has been added to provide an insect habitat.

We used

- ❶ *Salvia nemorosa* 'Lubecca' x 1 ❷ *Polemonium reptans* 'White Pearl' x 1
❸ *Achillea* 'Fanal' x 1 ❹ *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low' x 1
❺ *Lavender* 'Munstead' x 2
❻ *Geranium* 'Glenluce' x 1 ❼ Approx 40cm terracotta pot



Twilight glow

Luminous blooms of pink, blue, purple and lime green, coupled with the evening fragrance of the nicotiana plants mean this display, while attractive by day, becomes more magical as the light fades. Compact dahlia varieties are perfect for pots, although they may need some support. Start tubers into growth in mid to late March and sow tobacco plant seed at the same time. The other plants are available online as plug plants in March and April.

We used

- ❶ *Dahlia* 'Twynning's After Eight' x 1
- ❷ *Nicotiana* 'Lime Green' x 2
- ❸ *Isotoma axillaris* 'Gemini Blue' x 1
- ❹ *Verbena* 'Samira Blue' x 2
- ❺ Approx 38cm fauna shell pattern cylinder



Elegant trailer

A coordinated colour scheme creates a more elegant display than a haphazard mix. To achieve this delicate effect, we used mostly trailing plants in pale pinks and white, with more vivid calibrachoa to liven it up. The euphorbias make a central froth of tiny blooms, but handle them carefully as their sap is an irritant. Just a month after planting in early May, this sun-loving display was overflowing with flowers.

We used

- ❶ *Calibrachoa* 'MiniFamous Double PinkTastic' x 3
- ❷ *Euphorbia hypericifolia* 'Diamond Frost' x 2
- ❸ *Pelargonium* 'Ville de Dresden' x 3
- ❹ *Lophospermum* 'Lofos Compact White' x 2
- ❺ Approx 35cm wire basket with coconut-fibre liner



Herbal infusion

Complement the flower colours of the fuchsia with soft purple blooms and foliage – here we've used a dusky purple sage and a delicate nemesia. Sage is a good foil for 'Brutus' with textured leaves in a variety of dark tones, which can also be picked for use in the kitchen. The nemesia will flower non-stop over a long period if you deadhead it regularly. If you can't find nemesia, this display would work well with annual verbena or purple petunias.

We used

- ❶ *Nemesia* 'Mirabelle' x 2 ❷ Purple sage x 2
❸ *Fuchsia* 'Brutus' x 1 ❹ Approx 30cm terracotta pot



Midday sizzler

The cheery, brightly coloured contents of this terracotta cylinder reflect the warm, sunny conditions that they revel in. Purchase the largest canna tubers you can find, pot up in March and grow on, protecting them from cold. *Petchoa* (petunia crossed with calibrachoa) and solenostemon (coleus) are available as plug plants from mid-March onwards – pot them up and give them a warm spot under cover to start them off.

We used

- ❶ *Canna* 'Phasion' x 2
- ❷ *Solenostemon scutellarioides* 'Campfire' x 1
- ❸ *Petchoa* 'Sunray Pink' x 3
- ❹ *Solenostemon* 'Great Falls Angel' x 2
- ❺ Approx 47cm terracotta pot

Zest to impress

Taking a stylistic cue from the modern, grey pot, the selection of plants includes fresh, silvery foliage for a clean, zesty look and aroma. The eucalyptus is the star, with its unique sweet- pine scent. Artemisia adds a bitter herbaceous note and is just crying out to be gently ruffled. Lemony thyme will quickly grow to cascade down the sides, enhancing the herbal zing. Take time to move the eucalyptus into a permanent position after one season, so as to minimise any disturbance of its delicate root system.

We used

- ❶ *Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal' x 1
- ❷ *Eucalyptus pulverulenta* 'Baby Blue' x 1
- ❸ *Jacobaea maritima* x 1
- ❹ *Campanula portenschlagiana* 'Ambella White'
- ❺ *Thymus* 'Silver Queen' and *T. citriodorus* x 1
- ❻ *Artemisia arborescens* x 1
- ❼ 43cm Elho grey container





Full of old-style charm

Cram a pot with fuchsias, busy Lizzies and pinks for a cottage-garden feel. To get the look, mix shades of pink and purple for a pretty, soft style of planting. Look out for New Guinea busy Lizzies as they are resistant to pests and diseases. This combination is good for a spot in the shade.

We used

❶ *Fuchsia* 'Brutus' x 1 ❷ *Dianthus* 'Red Dwarf' x 3 ❸ Pink double busy Lizzies x 2 ❹ Approx 30cm terracotta pot

High standards

Use standard plants to create height and impact. We've used three lavenders with purple petunias and silver helichrysum at the base. To get the look you don't need to stick to this plant list, simply use the same colours and line up the standards.

We used

- ❶ Lavender standard x 3
- ❷ Purple and lilac petunias x 6
- ❸ Silver helichrysum x 1
- ❹ *Verbena* 'Homestead Purple' x 1
- ❺ 50cm-long grey metal trough



Metallic sparks

A shallow copper bucket found in a salvage yard makes a handsome home for these perennials, grown mainly for their colourful, shapely leaves. Swaying in the lightest breeze, golden hakonechloa tumbles gracefully, contrasting with multi-coloured houttuynia and the starchy succulent. This display would be happy in a lightly shaded spot outdoors all year, but remove the tender echeveria and grow it indoors before frost arrives.

We used

- ❶ *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' x 1
- ❷ *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' x 2
- ❸ *Houttuynia cordata* 'Chameleon' x 1
- ❹ *Carex morrowii* 'Everglow' x 2
- ❺ *Echeveria* 'Perle von Nürnberg' x 2
- ❻ Antique copper bowl



Full of flowers

Choose a colour theme and stick to it – here a strict mix of pink and purple, with petunias, geraniums, verbena and nemesia, creates a traditional look with a modern twist. Cram as many plants as possible into your hanging basket for an explosion of flowery cottage charm. It's a great way of injecting colour into a space.

We used

- ❶ Purple nemesia x 3
- ❷ Purple and cerise trailing petunias x 5
- ❸ Purple trailing verbena x 3
- ❹ Lilac ivy-leaf pelargoniums x 3
- ❺ Approx 35cm metal hanging basket





Partial to a little shade

This is the perfect combination for a long display of interest. The penstemon provides height and flowers that last from July through to October, while the hardy geranium sends up delicate blooms for months. *Alchemilla mollis* is an excellent groundcover plant, so it's perfect for the garden once you're finished with your container. It has yellow flowers and waxy leaves that hold water droplets beautifully. Stand this pot in sun or partial shade.

We used

- ❶ *Penstemon* 'Elgar Nimrod' x 1
- ❷ *Alchemilla mollis* x 1
- ❸ *Geranium x oxonianum* 'Wargrave Pink' x 1
- ❹ Approx 45cm wood barrel

Sun seekers

This group of sun-loving plants with vibrant flowers is ideal for a sunny patio. The yellow argyranthemum adds both height to the centre of the basket and a contrasting colour, while the calibrachoa is planted around the edges and tumbles over the sides. The trailing begonia is planted in gaps around the sides. The basket will look best from mid to late summer.

We used

- ❶ *Argyranthemum* 'Reflection Lemon Cream' x 3
- ❷ *Begonia* 'Apricot Shades' x 4
- ❸ *Calibrachoa* 'Coral Reef' x 4
- ❹ 35cm lattice metal hanging basket





Simply fragrant

Keep it simple with a plant that will bring colour and scent to the patio. Lavender is an easy and reliable evergreen shrub that will brighten a container all summer. 'Hidcote' is a compact variety that flowers from July to September. Combined with long-flowering pansies and an ornamental grass, this mix is a winner.

We used

- ❶ Lavender 'Hidcote' x 1 ❷ Pansy 'Freefall' x 3
❸ Carex x 1 ❹ Approx 30cm glazed pot



Magnet for pollinators

Create a pot for pollinators by combining a scabious such as 'Blue Diamonds' with other plants that are attractive to beneficial insects. English lavender is an obvious choice, with its blooms bringing beautiful scent to the scheme, while a pink perennial salvia punctuates this display with elegant vertical spikes.

We used

- ❶ *Salvia nemorosa* 'Sensation Deep Rose Improved' x 1
- ❷ *Scabiosa* 'Blue Diamonds' x 1
- ❸ Lavender x 1
- ❹ Approx 30cm terracotta pot



Heaven scent

Fill your garden with a heady fragrance using this simple container recipe. The rose is repeat flowering and will provide vibrant colour and scent all summer long, while nicotiana adds scent into the evening. The French lavender has a long flowering season and will thrive in a sunny spot.

We used

- ❶ *Rosa* 'Gertrude Jekyll' x 1
- ❷ *Nicotiana* x 2
- ❸ *Lavender* 'Regal Splendour' 1
- ❹ Approx 45cm stone pot



Sun worshipper

Take inspiration from cottage garden style and team up early- and late-flowering annuals to create a rustic border in a basket. Red and green coleus mask the stems of nicotiana and make better cohorts in sunshine than golden varieties, as they cope well with sun, heat and humidity. From midsummer, spicy-coloured rudbeckia joins the crowd and carries the display into autumn. Pinch out the tips of the coleus to keep them bushy and keep deadheading flowers to ensure further blooms.

We used

- ❶ Purple nicotiana x 3 ❷ *Rudbeckia hirta* 'Tiger Eye' x 3
❸ Variegated coleus x 6 ❹ Approx 1m woven planter



In the pink all summer

Ideal for a sunny spot, this is an eye-catching combination of velvety-red clematis rising above candy-pink bedding. Bury the base of the clematis 5cm below the surface to encourage new shoots to form and deter clematis wilt.

We used

- ❶ *Clematis* 'Rebecca' x 1
- ❷ *Argyranthemum* 'Petite Pink' x 1
- ❸ *Pelargonium* 'BullsEye Light Pink' x 1
- ❹ *Pelargonium* 'Voodoo' x 1
- ❺ 33cm x 42cm metal tub, hazel stakes 1.5m tall, tied at the top to make a wigwam



Co-ordinated colours

Keep to a narrow colour palette for a harmonious display. In our planter, *Sambucus nigra* 'Black Beauty' takes centre stage and provides structure as tones of pink and purple come and go beneath its dark leaves. *Helleborus* 'Red Lady' flowers from January to April and sporadically through the year, joined by the *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve', geranium, aster and hesperantha.

We used

- ❶ *Sambucus nigra porphyrophylla* 'Eva' x 1
- ❷ *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve' x 1
- ❸ *Aster* 'Chatterbox' x 1 ❹ *Geranium* 'Ballerina' x 1
- ❺ *Hesperantha coccinea* 'Pink Princess' x 1
- ❻ *Helleborus x hybridus* 'Red Lady' x 1
- ❼ *Euphorbia cyparissias* 'Fens Ruby' x 1
- ❽ Approx 60cm square wood planter

An aromatic blend

Sweet William will add scent and colour to your garden all summer long. The flowers come in shades of red, white and purple from June right through to September. Partnered with tough rosemary and glossy ivy, this combination is a perfect mix of pretty and fragrant.

We used

- ❶ Rosemary x 1
- ❷ *Dianthus barbatus* (sweet William) x 5
- ❸ Ivy x 1
- ❹ Approx 30cm terracotta pot





Keep it natural

Quick and easy to put together, this mini-wildflower meadow is designed to attract pollinators. The grasses add movement, while the achillea and geum provide bright shades that will light up a sunny place on the patio all summer.

We used

- ❶ *Centranthus ruber* x 1
- ❷ *Linaria purpurea* 'Canon Went' x 2
- ❸ *Geum* 'Mrs J Bradshaw' x 1
- ❹ *Hordeum jubatum* x 2
- ❺ *Achillea* 'Terracotta' x 1
- ❻ *Salvia nemorosa* x 2
- ❼ Approx 40cm fibre clay pot



All-weather winner

Pale pastel pink blooms, shining silver-grey foliage and a delicate froth of white stars belie this container's durability, making it a great free-standing feature for a sunny terrace. The combination of ivy leaf pelargoniums, salvia, plectranthus and euphorbia keeps its cool in droughts yet shrugs off wet summers thanks to the foliage tapestry, which keeps things interesting between flushes of flowers. There's plenty in this pot to keep the show going in bad weather, even if a few things struggle.

We used

- ❶ *Salvia greggii* 'Lipstick' x 1
- ❷ *Plectranthus argentatus* 'Silver Shield' x 1
- ❸ *Euphorbia hypericifolia* 'Diamond Frost' x 3
- ❹ Approx 45cm terracotta pot



A late developer

This display will brighten up the garden in late summer, just as many flowers are starting to fade. Give your patio a boost with a hot combination of colours from the crocosmia, which flowers from August to October, red penstemons and the cheery daisy-shaped heads of rudbeckia. Ideal for a sunny spot on your patio.

We used

- ❶ Red penstemons x 2
- ❷ *Rudbeckia fulgida* x 1
- ❸ *Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora* 'Emily McKenzie' x 1
- ❹ *Anemanthele lessoniana* x 1
- ❺ Approx 60cm terracotta pot



Mini meadow

If you haven't got space for a meadow but crave the wild look, a wildflower pot is the perfect solution. Using native wildflowers and their close relatives, you can create your own meadow on a much reduced scale. The blend of flowers and grasses will both benefit wildlife and look good over a long season. Leave out the orlaya and briza if you want to put it in semi-shade.

We used

- ❶ *Briza maxima* x 1
- ❷ *Orlaya grandiflora* x 1
- ❸ *Digitalis x mertonensis* x 1
- ❹ *Campanula glomerata* 'Emerald' x 1
- ❺ *Viola cornuta* x 1
- ❻ Approx 40cm green glazed terracotta pot

Light up the shade

Here's a fresh bouquet for a spot that needs brightening. It combines lime-leaved coleus and silver-edged tulbaghia with euphorbia and golden bidens, both of which will keep on blooming whatever the weather. Ideal for a window ledge, steps or a low wall, it needs only a few hours of sun a day to look lush and flowery. Pinch out any flower spikes from the coleus to keep it looking pretty and stop it swamping its companions.

We used

- ❶ Golden coleus x 3
- ❷ *Euphorbia hypericifolia* 'Diamond Frost' x 1
- ❸ *Bidens ferulifolia* x 2
- ❹ *Tulbaghia violacea* 'Silver Lace' x 2 (foliage pictured)
- ❺ 50cm-long terrazzo trough

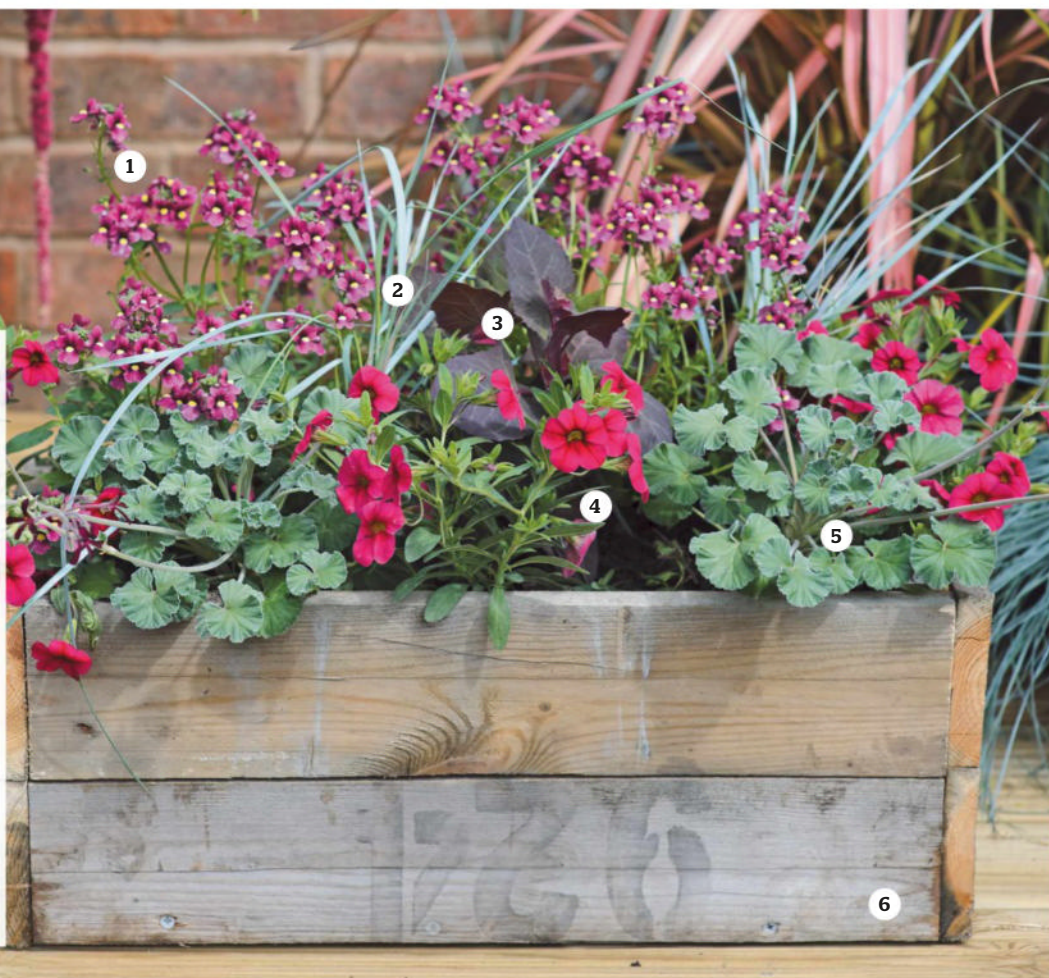


Great in a crate

Make a rustic pot or window box from an old wooden box lined with polythene. This one is packed with bright blooms that will create an eye-catching feature from June through to September. The colours in this combination complement each other perfectly, but if you can't find these flowers you could try verbenas.

We used

- ❶ *Nemesia* x 3
- ❷ *Elymus magellanicus* x 2
- ❸ Red orach x 1
- ❹ Calibrachoa x 3
- ❺ *Pelargonium sidoides* x 2
- ❻ 50cm-long wooden crate

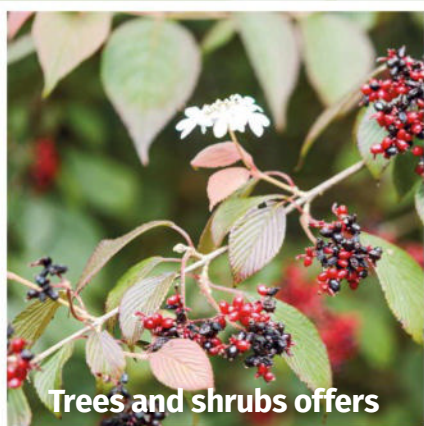


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Modern romance

A fragrant rose just had to be the star of this classically romantic container. And Rosa 'The Generous Gardener' certainly delivers in that department, with its soft, sweet and totally scrumptious perfume. A hot splash of love-it-or-loathe-it dianthus amplifies the sweetness – and surely the name 'Tickled Pink' makes up for any garage-bouquet associations? The 'spiller' here is *Erigeron karvinskianus*: no fragrance, but sometimes when you look this charming you can't have it all. This rose is a climber so, come late winter, move her out to a sunny spot in the garden with a support frame and let her run free.

We used

- ❶ Rosa 'The Generous Gardener' x 1
- ❷ Dianthus 'Tickled Pink' x 1
- ❸ Viola 'Raspberry' x 1 ❹ *Erigeron karvinskianus* x 2
- ❺ Approx 35cm terracotta graphite



Sunny selection

Yellow and orange help lift a scene by bringing a little sunshine to the garden. Yellow also enhances the warmth of a terracotta pot. The foliage of the silver helichrysum forms a simple foil for the bidens, zinnias and lantana. The range of different yellows gives the display depth and texture.

We used

- ❶ *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Sonata White' x 2
- ❷ *Zinnia marylandica* 'Zahara Yellow' x 4
- ❸ *Lantana camara* 'Lucky Pure Gold' x 2
- ❹ *Bidens aurea* x 2
- ❺ *Helichrysum* 'Silver Mist' x 2
- ❻ Approx 50cm terracotta pot



1

2

3



Autumn

All you need for a splash of autumn colour is a small space on a patio or doorstep. While the season conjures up images of gardens ablaze with vibrant leaf colour, you don't need a large canvas for big impact. You can bring the fiery shades of autumn into your space with a well-planted container that will look good into winter.

Our patios and doorsteps are bursting with colour during the summer months, but often look dull during autumn without bright bedding to boost the display. But with some considered plant shopping it's possible to create striking containers that will provide interest for months. Take your pick from an array of textural grasses, late flowers, glossy evergreens and berrying shrubs, which can all be transferred into borders come spring.

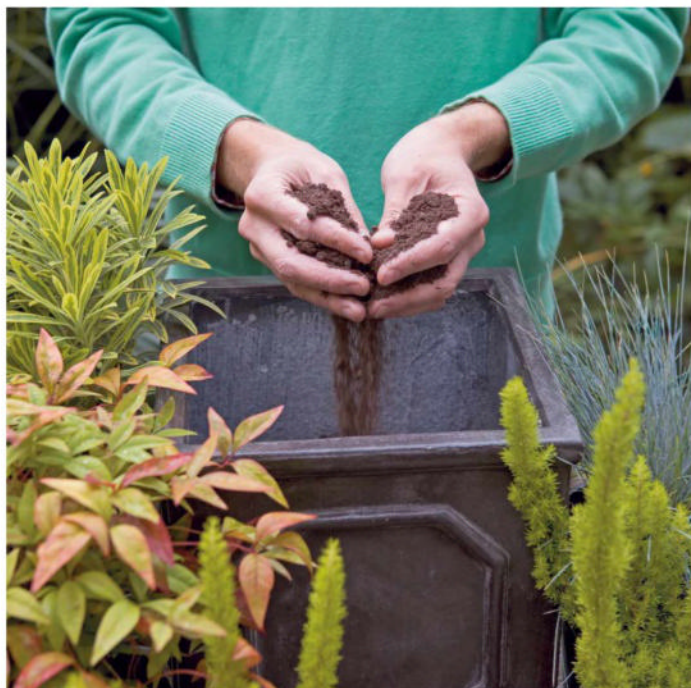
We used

❶ *Pyracantha* 'Soleil d'Or' x 1 ❷ *Carex buechananii* 'Red Rooster' x 1 ❸ Orange violas x 4 ❹ *Solanum capsicastrum* x 2 ❺ Approx 30cm glazed orange pot

How to plant up an autumn pot

To get the best performance from your containers, preparation is key. Use a good quality multi-purpose compost and water your plants before planting. Plants won't grow much over winter, so pack them in for

maximum instant impact. Position containers in a sheltered spot but where they can be seen and appreciated from indoors. They are at least risk from rain, wind and snow when placed close to a wall.



1 Add peat-free, multi-purpose compost to the container until two-thirds full. There's no need to add fertiliser until spring.



2 Tip the plants from their pots and tease out the roots to help them establish. Place the tallest near the back and firm in well.



3 Add the shorter plants and check you're happy with the overall look. Fill any gaps with more compost and firm in well.



4 Tap the sides of the container to settle the compost and water it well. Don't let it dry out, but don't overwater during winter.



Foliage to the fore

As the warm tones of the season come into play, this evergreen pot is perfect for your patio or doorstep. Nandina's fiery colours combined with vibrant greens create a display that's full of contrast. All the plants are evergreen, fully hardy and undemanding, meaning this display will survive year-round with minimal fuss.

We used

- ❶ *Euphorbia x martini* 'Ascot Rainbow' x 1
- ❷ *Nandina domestica* 'Fire Power' x 1
- ❸ *Erica arborea* 'Albert's Gold' x 1
- ❹ *Festuca glauca* 'Elijah Blue' x 1
- ❺ Approx 30cm square faux-lead planter



Purple pageant

This pot gives a firework display of textures and vivid purples, lilac and burgundy hues, to liven up the duller corners. The flowers die down over winter, but the evergreen base and purple heuchera will carry the display through until spring. Beautyberry really lives up to its name, with pale-pink flowers in summer, as well as the purple berries it sports in autumn. These plants need minimal care and are happy in a container for a year or so. Trim and tidy in mid to late spring to keep them compact and vibrant and cut back the pennisetum to 10cm for strong regrowth in summer.

We used

- ❶ *Callicarpa bodinieri* 'Profusion' (beautyberry) x 1
- ❷ *Heuchera* 'Forever Purple' x 1 ❸ *Hebe* x 1
- ❹ *Polystichum tsussimense* (Korean rock fern) x 1
- ❺ *Hedera helix* x 1 ❻ *Pennisetum* x 1
- ❼ Purple pansies x 2 Ⓣ Approx 46cm Ribbed galvanised tub



Shady showstopper

This pot brings a light, fresh feel with its shades of cheery pink. The magenta alstroemeria and dusky double-flowered anemone will both bloom into November, while the bold, spiky foliage of the cordyline adds year-round shades of warm purple and shocking pink in each dagger-shaped leaf. All these plants enjoy moisture and light shade. For a similar effect, try a pink echinacea, pink dahlia and *Scabious* 'Raspberry Sorbet'.

We used

- ❶ *Anemone x hybrida* 'Pretty Lady Julia' x 1
- ❷ *Cordyline* 'Pink Passion' x 1
- ❸ *Alstroemeria* 'Princess Louise' x 1
- ❹ Approx 30cm terracotta pot



Strong structure

The architectural phormium provides the backbone of this delicate combination by adding structure and height, with the cyclamen creating floral interest. This pot is ideal for several months of colour from the beginning of autumn right into winter.

We used

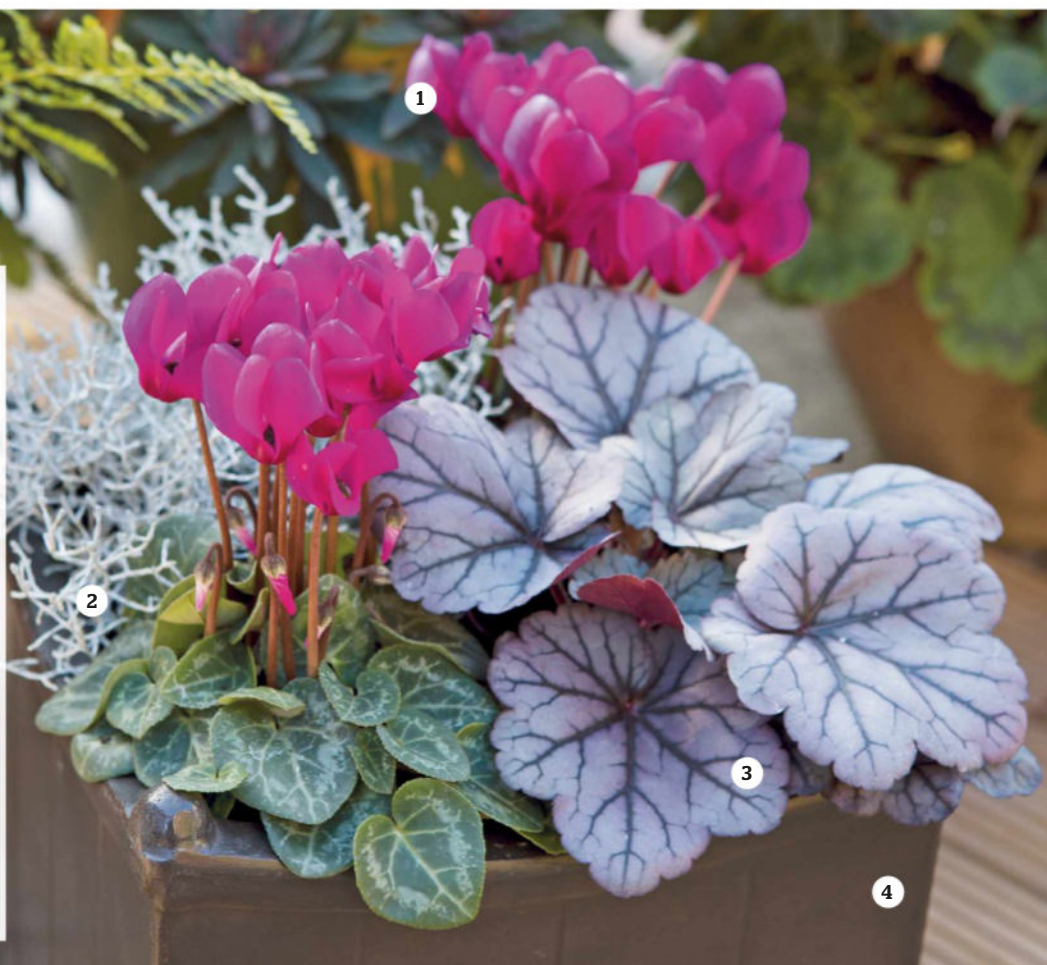
- ❶ *Phormium* 'Pink Stripe' x 1
- ❷ Pink miniature cyclamen x 3
- ❸ Cerise heather x 1
- ❹ *Hylotelephium sieboldii* x 1
- ❺ Approx 20cm terracotta pot

Frosted favourite

With autumn comes the first low temperatures, and this mix looks as if it already has a dusting of frost. *Heuchera* 'Sugar Plum' offers spectacularly veined foliage, while the cerise cyclamen adds a splash of rich colour, and the 'ever-silver' cushion bush (*Calocephalus brownii*) helps to tie the combo together. Keep the latter frost-free. If you want to site the container in shade, replace the cushion bush with another silver-tinted heuchera.

We used

- ❶ Cerise cyclamen x 2
- ❷ *Calocephalus brownii* x 1
- ❸ *Heuchera* 'Sugar Plum' x 1
- ❹ Approx 20cm square faux-lead planter



Increase the contrast

Combine a traditional container with a zingy mix of plants to create a striking display. The lime foliage and cerise flowers contrast brilliantly, while the black ophiopogon adds depth.

We used

- ❶ *Skimmia x confusa* 'Kew Green' x 1
- ❷ *Heuchera* 'Lime Marmalade' x 2
- ❸ *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' x 1
- ❹ Cerise miniature cyclamen x 2
- ❺ Approx 30cm square metal planter



Dare to go dark

Be strict with your colour scheme, using only purple plants to create a dark, sultry display. The dusky-leaved heucheras are the perfect partner for the arching phormium. Just make sure you protect the phormium in a very cold winter. Weave a few velvety purple winter pansies through the display when you plant up the pot – they'll bloom during warm periods from autumn through to spring.

We used

- ❶ *Phormium* 'Black Velvet' x 1
- ❷ *Carex comans* bronze-leaved x 1
- ❸ Purple winter pansies x 5
- ❹ *Heuchera* 'Obsidian' x 2
- ❺ Approx 20cm terracotta pot

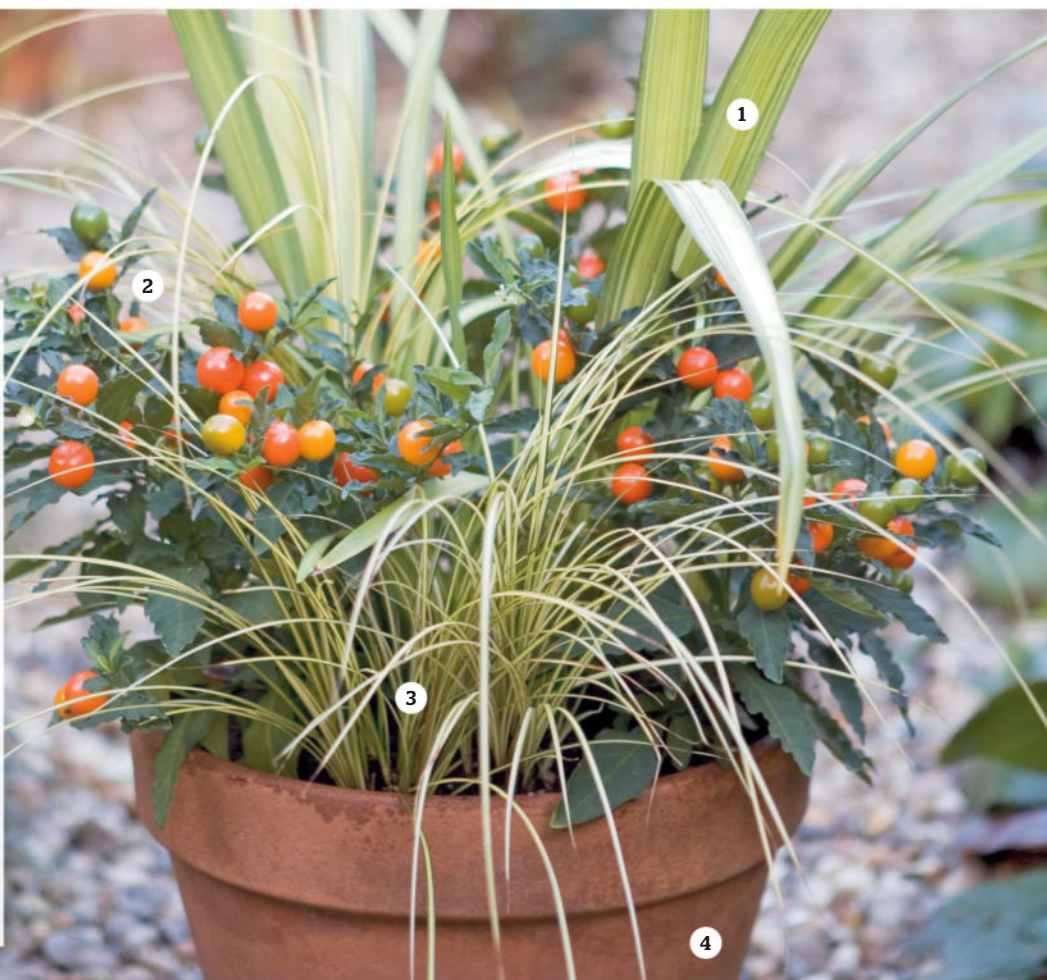


Bright and breezy

The shiny orange fruits of winter cherry (*Solanum capsicastrum*) are perfect for bringing a bit of cheer to the garden. Their shape and habit provide a good contrast with the structural phormium – they also fill lots of space at little cost. The delicate carex is a good addition, with its leaves resembling miniature versions of the phormium's. The winter cherry's fruit is poisonous, so keep this plant out of reach of children.

We used

- ❶ *Phormium* 'Yellow Wave' x 1
- ❷ *Solanum capsicastrum* x 3
- ❸ *Carex* 'Evergold' x 1
- ❹ Approx 30cm terracotta pot





Bright and dark

This display combines vibrant-pink flowers with luxurious, dark foliage to striking effect. It's perfect for brightening a sheltered spot in your garden, or plant up two and place them either side of your front door, giving you and your guests a glorious welcome. The flowers will last until the first frosts and the foliage right through winter. Leave the flowerheads of the hydrangea in place after they've faded for extra interest. In spring, replace the cyclamen with early flowers like primulas or potted flowering bulbs such as hyacinths. You could also add a hellebore. The plants are packed in tightly, so the pot looks lush from the start.

We used

- ❶ *Cyclamen* 'Neon Pink' x 5 ❷ *Heuchera* 'Black Beauty' x 2
❸ *Hydrangea macrophylla*, pink x 1 ❹ *Polystichum polyblepharum* x 1 ❺ *Dryopteris affinis* x 1
❻ Approx 50cm galvanised steel container



Stand out from the crowd

This potted display of rich purples marks a change in the seasons as the heat of summer begins to fade away. The velvety pansies steal the show, while the other plants create an interesting mix of colour and texture – a plain terracotta pot provides a simple counterpoint. Leave out the heather if you want to put it in a shady spot. The ajuga and fern can be planted out in the garden when the display is past its best.

We used

- ❶ *Asplenium scolopendrium* Crispum Group x 1
- ❷ Purple heather x 1
- ❸ Purple pansies x 2
- ❹ *Ajuga reptans* 'Braunherz' x 1
- ❺ Approx 20cm terracotta pot



Fresh look for old favourites

The glazed pot gives this display a contemporary edge and proves that the choice of container can make all the difference to the overall effect. All the light tones work together with subtle contrasts in texture rather than colour. The carex has a very loose and flowing habit, the thyme's tiny leaves create a more stippled effect, while the glaucous foliage of the viola completes the textural composition so that its flowers can really sing out. Place this pot where there is plenty of light.

We used

- ❶ *Carex comans* 'Frosted Curls' x 1 ❷ Thyme 'Silver Posie' x 1
 ❸ *Viola* 'Panola Purple Face' x 6 ❹ Approx 30cm glazed pot



Bronzed by the sun

These plants are perfect for an autumn pot. The graceful bronze grass has great form and colour. The small-leaved sedum grows well in a container, reaching no more than 10cm in height, while the green and wine-red leaves of 'Dragon's Blood' provide ground cover alongside the long-flowering copper violas. Place this container in a well-lit spot.

We used

- ❶ *Carex comans* bronze-leaved x 1
- ❷ *Sedum spurium* 'Dragon's Blood' x 1
- ❸ Copper-coloured violas x 6
- ❹ Approx 25cm terracotta pot



Add an edible twist

Create a display full of rich tones by combining plants with dark red flowers and foliage. Mix shapes and textures to keep things interesting, and look to edibles for something unusual. Here, lettuce provides tasty pickings.

We used

- ❶ *Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra' x 1
- ❷ *Photinia x fraseri* 'Little Red Robin' x 1
- ❸ Burgundy winter pansies x 3
- ❹ *Heuchera* 'Purple Petticoats' x 1
- ❺ Lettuce 'Lollo Rossa' x 2
- ❻ Approx 25cm terracotta pot



Hot shot for any spot

For instant colour, nothing beats the winter cherry (*Solanum capsicastrum*) – it's widely available and produces its jolly orange fruits for weeks on end (although do be aware that these are poisonous). This works well with the bronze carex and winter-flowering pansies, as well as the cornus, which will drop its leaves in winter to emphasise its eye-catching red stems. These plants aren't fussy and will do well in almost any location.

We used

❶ *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' x 1 ❷ *Carex flagellifera* x 1
❸ *Solanum capsicastrum* x 1 ❹ Orange winter-flowering
pansies x 3 ❺ Approx 25cm glazed pot



Doorstep garden

This globe-shaped pot, with its knitted effect and lovely pale-blue tone is perfect for the colour scheme of these plants. The silver of the calocephalus and senecio are a perfect pairing with the fresh green of the aspidistra, which is often regarded as a house plant. Cyclamen, parahebe and a hardy geranium – selected for its foliage – finish off this instant look. This is a versatile pot and its compact size is ideal for a sheltered doorstep away from frost. Built for autumn, it has a fresh and different colour palette.

We used

- ❶ *Parahebe catarractae* 'Porlock' x 1
- ❷ *Aspidistra elatior* x 1
- ❸ *Gentiana* 'Blue Heart' x 1
- ❹ *Calocephalus brownii* x 1
- ❺ *Senecio* 'Angel Wings' x 1
- ❻ *Cyclamen* Miracle Series x 1
- ❼ *Geranium pratense* x 1
- ❽ Approx 28cm pastel-blue pot



1

2



Winter

At this time of year, it's more important than ever to have plenty of vibrant container displays. To create planting combinations that brighten up a dull winter day, look for plants with bright red berries, vivid stems that stand out, and variegated foliage that will catch any available light. There are also many that will flower even when it's cold - fill pots with snowdrops, hellebores and winter bedding.

Embrace the bauble-like berries of gaultheria, scarlet stems of cornus and glossy green holly leaves - just a few of the fantastic plants to look for this season. There are also winter-flowering shrubs such as heathers, skimmia and viburnum that will add structure to pots, as well as cheery colour to your patio or doorstep.

We used

- ❶ White winter cherry x 1
- ❷ *Helleborus niger* x 2
- ❸ *Calceolophus brownii* x 4 (keep frost-free)
- ❹ Approx 30cm steel tub (line with bubblewrap)

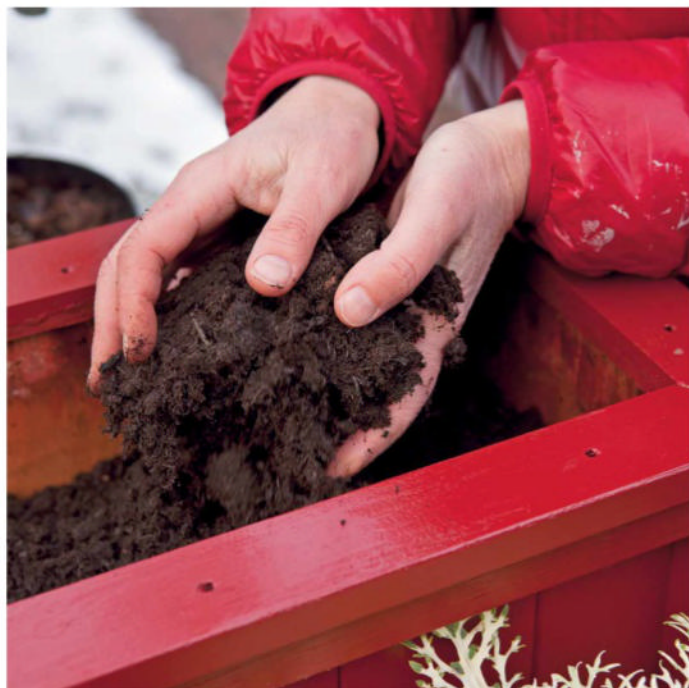
How to plant up window boxes

For an easy way to make an impact in winter, fill window boxes with festive-inspired planting. This display will not only brighten up your entrance, but also provide interest over the whole season. Whatever style of box you choose,

make sure your containers have plenty of drainage holes – the plants won't thrive if they're sitting in soggy compost. Don't add fertiliser as over the winter the plants aren't actively growing so they won't take up nutrients.



1 Put polystyrene in the base, so less compost is needed. To protect the wood, line with an old compost bag, with holes for drainage.



2 Fill with multi-purpose compost. You'll need to refresh the compost every six months if you're leaving the window box planted all year.



3 Place trailing plants near the edge and the tallest ones at the back where they'll add height, without blocking smaller plants.



4 Water well. Check regularly that the compost hasn't dried out – boxes don't get much rain, as they're sheltered by the building.



Window wonder

This generous mix of plants creates a flamboyant window box with a long shelf life. The ornamental kale sits among the glossy foliage like a giant snowflake. The red flowers of the skimmia and pansies will bring colour to any windowsill.

We used

- ❶ *Photinia x fraseri* 'Pink Marble' x 1
- ❷ *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella' x 1
- ❸ Red pansies, such as 'Red Blotch' x 6
- ❹ White ornamental kale x 1
- ❺ Variegated ivy x 3
- ❻ Wooden planter, approx L60cm x W25cm



Pep up a plain wall

Vibrant berries are a great way to give winter boxes, troughs and pots a boost. This selection of berried plants will provide plenty of colour, and grow to various heights for added interest. Florists' moss (check it's sustainably sourced) makes a handy mulch as well as an attractive outer covering for the trough liner. The shrubs can all be planted in the garden in spring.

We used

- ❶ Holly x 1
- ❷ Ivy x 3
- ❸ *Skimmia japonica reevesiana* x 1
- ❹ *Gaultheria procumbens* x 3
- ❺ Wrought-iron wall trough, approx L60cm



New year cheer

This cheery winter combination brings together a mix of foliage, texture and flower colour. In winter you can make the most of grasses, herbaceous perennials, small shrubs and winter bedding plants, including the vibrant cyclamen pictured. Add height with a shrub such as pieris and texture from evergreen grasses like carex. Aiming for plants with varying heights creates added interest.

We used

- ❶ *Pieris japonica* 'Purity' x 1
- ❷ *Carex testacea* x 1
- ❸ *Euphorbia amygdaloides* 'Purpurea' x 1
- ❹ Red bedding cyclamen x 3
- ❺ *Cyrtomium fortunei* x 1
- ❻ Approx 45cm terracotta pot



Red hot all winter long

The sizzling shades of this structural display provide an instant glow. The fiery stems of the cornus will shine throughout winter, while the burnished-copper grass and crimson heuchera and cyclamens create a block of colour that will be a perfect foil to the bright yellow buds of crocuses when they pop up in spring.

We used

- ❶ *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' x 1
- ❷ *Carex testacea* x 1
- ❸ Red mini cyclamens x 2
- ❹ *Heuchera* 'Fire Chief' x 2
- ❺ Approx 25cm terracotta pot



Evergreen shade-lover

The white Christmas rose (*Helleborus niger*) is the star of this pot, so pair it simply with evergreens to give it a chance to really shine. Here, we've used a plain green ivy combined with golden variegated foliage to create the perfect trio. This pot suits a sheltered, shady spot where it will act as a focal point. Pick off the flowers as they start to fade to keep it looking fresh.

We used

- ❶ *Helleborus niger* x 2
- ❷ Variegated osmanthus x 2
- ❸ Small-leaved ivy x 1
- ❹ Approx 30cm white glazed pot

Bewitching scent

Witch hazel adds structure and height to this display towering above a generous underplanting of cyclamen and ivy. It also has large yellow flowers in mid and late-winter, which have a wonderful scent. This is a simple yet striking winter combination.

We used

- ❶ *Hamamelis x intermedia*
'Arnold Promise' x 1
- ❷ White cyclamens x 6
- ❸ Ivy x 4
- ❹ Approx 60cm terracotta pot





Evergreen and gold

This collection of bright evergreens offers a constant vibrant glow to ease the gloomiest of days. Easily trimmed and clipped if necessary, all our choices are excellent in pots long term, although they will require separating and moving on into other pots after a year or two. The ruby-red leaves of the coprosma contrast beautifully with the more subtle pittosporum behind. In front, just a few winter aconites teased in among the variegated, trailing periwinkle inject a pop of golden yellow. Although leaves are their most popular attribute, periwinkles often flower through winter, especially in cosy corners, becoming more profuse as spring nears. Place in as much sun as possible and shelter from cold winds.

We used

- ❶ *Coprosma repens* 'Pina Colada' x 1
- ❷ *Eranthis hyemalis* (winter aconite) x 2
- ❸ *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golden Ball' x 1
- ❹ *Vinca minor* 'Illumination' (periwinkle) x 1
- ❺ *Thymus* 'Golden King' x 2
- ❻ Planter



Textural contrasts

This display is all about texture, with the billowing carex and robust skimmia providing a striking contrast to the cornus stems. The skimmia buds complement the red cornus, as does the bronze carex. Evergreen sedges and grasses work well with cornus – for a cool contrast, try blue fescue with silver senecio. Skimmias are available in different colours, so look for ones with green buds and try one of the berry forms such as *S. reevesiana* for Christmas pots.

We used

- ❶ *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' x 1 ❷ *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella' x 1 ❸ *Carex comans* bronze-leaved x 1
❹ Approx 25cm red glazed pot



Winter fire

The evergreens gathered in this modern but rustic pot will dramatically change colour in the winter cold. The bergenia leaves turn a deep red, while the tips of the false cypress take on a burnished bronze hue, and the euonymus's yellow-variegated foliage develops a reddish-pink flush. The corokia is more consistent in its colouring, but its wiry habit and drought-tolerance make it ideal for living in a large container indefinitely. Pot and plants should glow for weeks. For best results site where they can get as much sun and winter warmth as possible.

We used

- ❶ *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald 'n' Gold' x 1
- ❷ *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Gitte' (false cypress) x 1
- ❸ *Corokia x virgata* 'Sunsplash' x 1
- ❹ *Bergenia* 'Bressingham Ruby' x 1
- ❺ Approx 37cm rustic square pot



Well-structured approach

Phormiums give good structure and height to containers, making an eye-catching display, especially if combined with other plants that complement their shade. The bright gaultheria berries and dark hue of the ivy are perfect partners. Some ivy varieties, such as *Hedera algeriensis* 'Ravensholst' may colour up in winter to give this purple effect.

We used

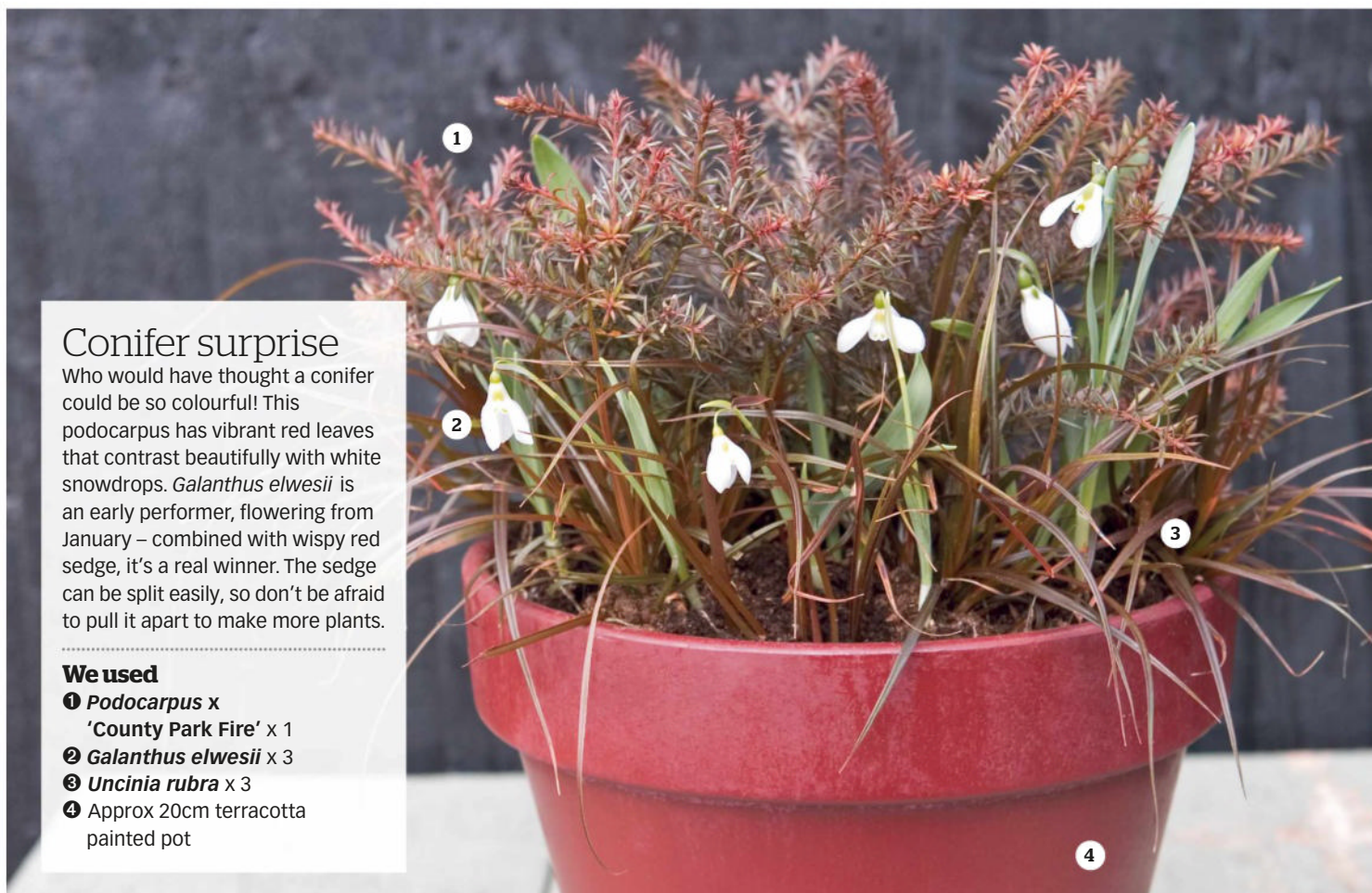
- ❶ Red phormium x 1 ❷ *Gaultheria procumbens* x 1
❸ *Hedera* 'Ravensholst' x 2 ❹ Approx 30cm terracotta pot

Conifer surprise

Who would have thought a conifer could be so colourful! This podocarpus has vibrant red leaves that contrast beautifully with white snowdrops. *Galanthus elwesii* is an early performer, flowering from January – combined with wispy red sedge, it's a real winner. The sedge can be split easily, so don't be afraid to pull it apart to make more plants.

We used

- ❶ *Podocarpus* x 'County Park Fire' x 1
- ❷ *Galanthus elwesii* x 3
- ❸ *Uncinia rubra* x 3
- ❹ Approx 20cm terracotta painted pot



Lasting elegance

Create a subtle yet sophisticated festive welcome with powder pinks and glaucous greys set against slate and charcoal. The fresh green mini pines, long-lasting cyclamens and dainty early-flowering hellebores will brighten up your windowsill for weeks.

We used

- ❶ Pink hellebores x 2
- ❷ *Cyclamen coum* x 2
- ❸ White ivy-leaved cyclamens x 3
- ❹ *Pinus sylvestris* x 3
- ❺ Trough, approx L70cm x W20cm





Leafy medley

Fill your garden with flowers and foliage this winter. The hellebores are set off by the striking foliage of the uncinia and heuchera, while the skimmia's flowers will brighten up the pot for weeks.

We used

- ❶ *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella' x 1
- ❷ *Helleborus niger* x 2
- ❸ *Mahonia eurybracteata* 'Soft Caress' x 1
- ❹ *Uncinia rubra* x 1
- ❺ *Heuchera* 'Lime Marmalade' x 1
- ❻ Approx 45cm terracotta pot



No-chill chillies

The warm tones of this display give it a rich, opulent feel and make it perfect for brightening a sheltered porch. The orange chillies steal the show but do need to be kept frost-free, while the cordyline provides the backbone. The violas, if kept deadheaded, will flower non-stop. Both the carex and cordyline will do well in the garden when the display is past its best.

We used

- ❶ *Cordyline* 'Red Star' x 1
- ❷ *Carex comans* bronzed-leaved x 2
- ❸ Orange-fruited chilli x 2
- ❹ Orange violas x 3
- ❺ Approx 40cm terracotta pot



Sunshine ready

Here we've made the most of the cornus's red stems, combining it with a phormium and euphorbia that feature complementary tones. Both plants are evergreen, meaning the display will look good throughout winter, and they can be planted in the garden if they start outgrowing the pot, as can the cornus. All these plants will grow well in a sunny spot in moist free-draining soil.

We used

- ❶ *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' x 1
- ❷ *Phormium tenax* 'Joker' x 1
- ❸ *Euphorbia x martini* x 1
- ❹ Approx 25cm red glazed pot





Edible

When you're short of space in the garden, squeezing in fruit and veg can be tricky. It's amazing how many varieties grow happily in pots, from easy-going salads, strawberries and herbs to climbing beans, peas and tomatoes. Most are good looking enough to proudly display on your patio.

For the best results when combining vegetables, choose varieties that crop at similar times and enjoy the same growing conditions. Or make a feature out of a single vegetable in a pot. Choose the largest containers you have room for and pamper your veg with daily watering and regular liquid feeds for a blend of colour, texture and, above all, flavour throughout the season.

We used

❶ Strawberry 'Florence' x 6 ❷ Approx 40cm metal bucket

How to plant summer veg in pots

The best way to fit more crops into a pot is to go vertical – climbing French beans are easy to grow and a good choice if you want to grow a few different crops. With the beans planted in the centre of your pot, there's room around the

outside to grow lettuce and spinach, which will enjoy the slight shade cast by the beans. Other crops that would work well around the outside include cut-and-come-again salad leaves, quick-cropping radishes or spring onions.



1 Fill the pot with multi-purpose compost and sow the bean seeds 15cm apart in the centre in May. Sink a sturdy support firmly on top.



2 Add the 'Lollo Rossa' lettuce plug plants around the base of the wigwam, leaving 15cm gaps for sowing the spinach seeds.



3 Sow the spinach seeds direct, about 2cm apart, in between the lettuce plants. They'll germinate and fill the gaps in about 10 days.



4 Water well after planting and water regularly through the summer as the veg grows. The pot will need watering daily in hot weather.



Tower of beans

Climbing beans are hungry plants, so ensure they have a big pot and plenty of water and sunshine. They'll cover a tall support with jungly foliage dotted with gorgeous pink or white flowers, followed by handsome purple, yellow or green pods. Lettuces and spinach will enjoy the slight shade offered around the base of the support.

We used

- ❶ Climbing French bean 'Cosse Violette' x 2
- ❷ Climbing French bean 'Cobra' x 2
- ❸ Lettuce 'Lollo Rossa' x 9
- ❹ Spinach 'Bordeaux' x 9
- ❺ 1.8m willow wigwam
- ❻ Approx 64cm terracotta pot



Feel the heat

Even a narrow windowsill can be host to a colourful and bountiful trough. The scarlet flowers and shiny chilli peppers planted here will look sublime by late summer. Luckily this trio make good horticultural bedfellows, too. It's thought that the scent of the pelargoniums repels unwanted insects and the radishes improve the chillies' flavour. The fast-growing radishes can be harvested before the other plants fill out.

We used

- ❶ Chilli pepper 'Basket of Fire' x 1
- ❷ Chilli pepper 'Cajun Belle' (or choose your favourite) x 1
- ❸ Red zonal pelargoniums x 2
- ❹ Packet of radish 'French Breakfast' seeds
- ❺ Wicker windowbox



Dwarf carrots and beans

Beans grow up and carrots grow down, so this combination is a lovely symbiotic use of space. Carrots enjoy the shade cast by the growing beans, and both plants have similar requirements for food and water. The dwarf runner bean 'Hestia' is small enough to grow in a container without becoming unwieldy. We underplanted the beans with a selection of mini carrots. Expect to harvest the first beans from 13 weeks, and the baby carrots from nine weeks.

We used

- ❶ Dwarf runner bean 'Hestia' x 3
- ❷ Carrot 'Little Finger' x 30
- ❸ Carrot 'Bambino' x 15
- ❹ 60cm-long painted wooden trough



Flowers and fruits

Combining flowers and fruiting crops not only looks good, it can also be beneficial. Flowers help to attract pollinating insects and pest controllers, ensuring you get a good crop and the pests are kept under control. Try growing colourful chillies with the colourful annual *Emilia javanica* 'Irish Poet' and dwarf tithonia, as used here, or why not train ipomoea up a beanpole to add height.

We used

- ❶ *Emilia javanica* 'Irish Poet' x 1 ❷ Chillies x 1
❸ *Tithonia* 'Fiesta del Sol' x 1 ❹ Approx 35cm terracotta pot

Picnic pickings

There can be no doubt that tomatoes and basil work well on the plate, and they make great pot companions too. It seems that growing them together enhances the tomato flavour, plus, just like French marigolds, the basil deters unwanted pests. This gingham-lined hanging basket saves patio space, allows the tomato plants to trail and looks as appetising as a summer picnic!

We used

- ❶ Tomato 'Maskotka' x 2
- ❷ Tomato 'Losetto' x 1
- ❸ Sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) x 1
- ❹ Bush basil (*Ocimum minimum*) x 1
- ❺ French marigold 'Bonanza Yellow' plug plants x 6
- ❻ Hanging basket





Fragrant mint

Herbs are perfect for pots, placed outside your back door for easy pickings. Mint has a vigorous habit and will run amok if left to its own devices in a border. It's a much better idea to contain it in a pot.

We used

- ❶ Spearmint x 1
- ❷ Approx 30cm recycled urn



Vibrant mixed salad

Herbs and salad leaves can be grown in a shallow container or window box – a depth of 10cm is all you need. Add a mulch of grit to hold in moisture. Use contrasting colours and textures, such as long onion leaves against the frilly lobes of 'Lollo Rossa' lettuces, and dainty flat-leaf parsley next to purple beet leaves.

We used

- ❶ Spring onions x 3
- ❷ Purple beet leaves x 1
- ❸ Parsley x 4
- ❹ Lettuce 'Lollo Rossa' x 4
- ❺ Approx 30cm x 12cm enamel bowl



Tasty broad beans

Broad beans are perfect for pots if you choose compact varieties such as 'The Sutton', 'Statissa' or 'Robin Hood'. The pods can be eaten young or left to mature so you can enjoy the beans. From March, sow six to eight seeds in a 45cm pot. To prevent blackfly and help the pods swell, pinch out the shoot tips.

We used

- ❶ Broad bean 'Statissa' x 5
- ❷ Approx 45cm terracotta pot



Veg for shade

Most brassicas need too much space to be grown in containers, but kale is perfect for pots and will provide pickings all winter. Combine with oriental leaves such as pak choi that enjoy similarly shady conditions. Asparagus peas, covered in brick-red flowers, add colour if you plant up in summer. Keep the compost damp.

We used

- ❶ Kale 'Nero di Toscana' x 3
- ❷ Pak choi 'Purple' x 6
- ❸ Asparagus pea x 2
- ❹ Small recycled tin bath

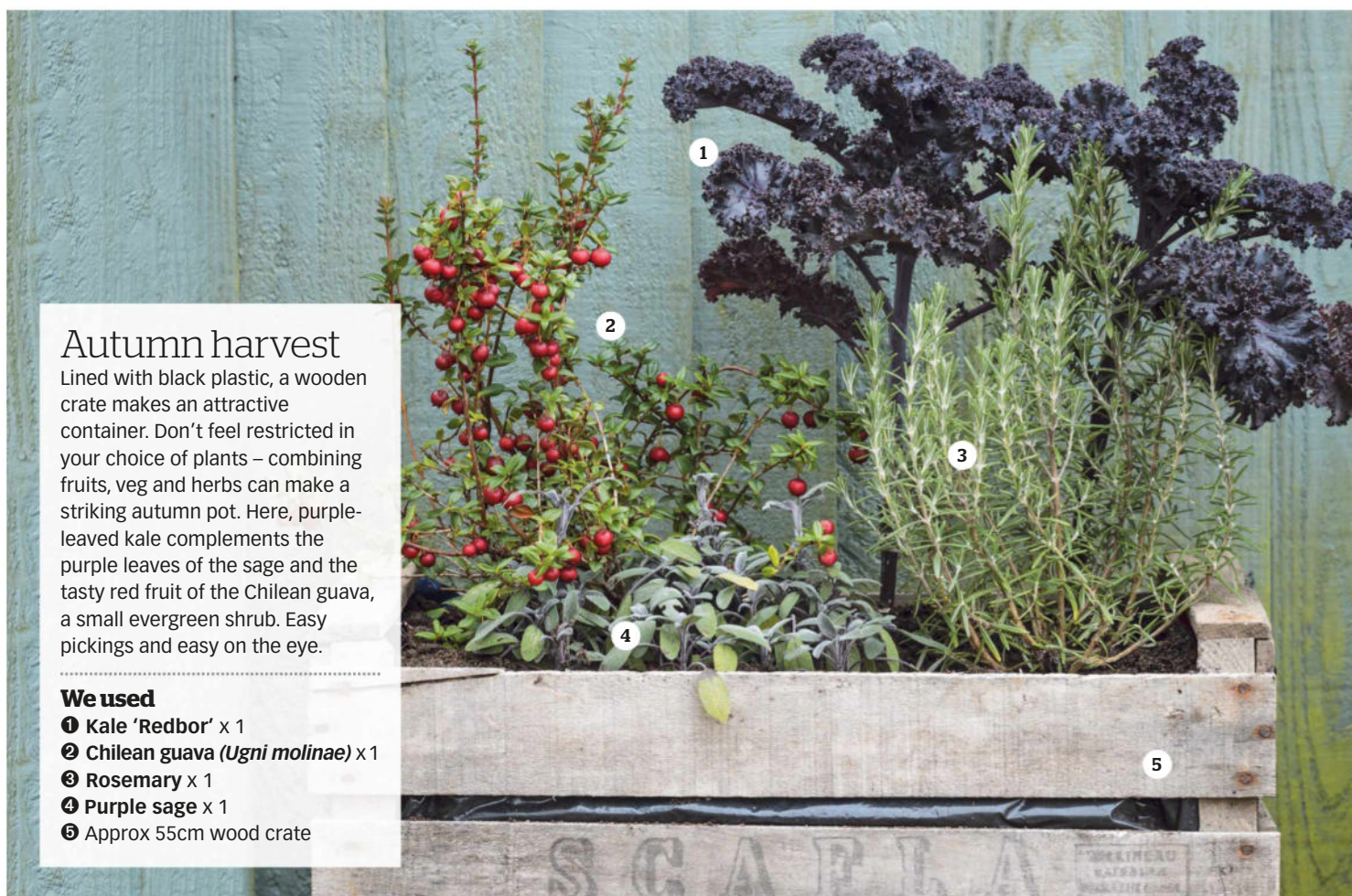


Colourful chard

The stems of Swiss chard come in many colours, including red, white, pink and yellow. The leaves can be dark or light green, with the veins echoing the stem colour. These hardy plants stand up to a little neglect and grow well in shade. Sow direct and thin the seedlings to a final spacing of 10cm.

We used

- ❶ Chard 'Ruby Stems' x 2
- ❷ Chard 'Bright Lights' x 2
- ❸ 40cm-long steel trough



Autumn harvest

Lined with black plastic, a wooden crate makes an attractive container. Don't feel restricted in your choice of plants – combining fruits, veg and herbs can make a striking autumn pot. Here, purple-leaved kale complements the purple leaves of the sage and the tasty red fruit of the Chilean guava, a small evergreen shrub. Easy pickings and easy on the eye.

We used

- ❶ Kale 'Redbor' x 1
- ❷ Chilean guava (*Ugni molinae*) x 1
- ❸ Rosemary x 1
- ❹ Purple sage x 1
- ❺ Approx 55cm wood crate

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A person wearing a blue sweater is holding a large, weathered metal bucket. Inside the bucket is a wooden crate, and inside the crate is a large, empty terracotta pot. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor garden setting.

Getting started

To get the best display from your containers, it's vital to carry out a few essential care tasks. If you give the time to jobs like lining your container, choosing the right pot and compost, as well as watering regularly and feeding your plants, you'll be rewarded with a spectacular display that lasts. Discover everything you need to know in our guide, starting here, from must-do preparation and how to get watering right, to easy protection tips.



Choose the right pot

Using the appropriate container will make all the difference to your display. From traditional terracotta, which creates a cottage-garden mood, to contemporary metal for modern, urban spaces, there really is something for everyone.

Terracotta weathers beautifully but is porous and not great at retaining moisture. Look for terracotta pots that are frost-proof, rather than frost-resistant, as they'll stand up to hard winter conditions.

Timber Extend the life of timber pots by treating them with clear preserver and use paint to give wood containers a new look.

Metal is perfect for a modern or urban-style garden, and metal containers make a great home for plants with architectural foliage. They can get hot in a sunny spot, however, so line them with bubblewrap to protect the plants' roots.



Use the right compost

For seasonal displays, peat-free, multi-purpose compost is ideal – boost it with slow-release fertiliser and it'll do a good job for several months. If you're planting a more permanent container, with topiary or an evergreen shrub, use a soil-based compost such as John Innes No.3, as it will retain its structure and hold on to nutrients better.



Line your container

Combat the porous nature of wood and terracotta pots by lining them with punctured plastic (old compost sacks are ideal) to help retain moisture and keep them in good condition.

Improve drainage

Before you start planting, choose containers with adequate drainage holes. Then make sure these holes don't get blocked. The best material to ensure good drainage is high-quality compost, which is formulated for that purpose. Polystyrene will become compacted and form a barrier. Crocks can block holes too.



Planting

Container planting isn't difficult, but it is important to get it right. Giving plants a good start, choosing the correct compost and feeding plants all help to guarantee a bumper performance. Follow a few simple steps and you'll be looking at a winning display in no time.



Adding compost and fertiliser

Once your pot is about two-thirds full of compost, break up any lumps with your hands and mix in the right measurement of slow-release fertiliser if you're planting up in spring or summer. If you're planting a winter container, there's no need to add plant food.



Planting up

Remove each plant from its pot, gently teasing the roots with your fingers to encourage them to grow into the compost and establish well. Fill around the rootballs with compost. Once the plants are all in place, fill the gaps between with compost. Don't overfill – leave a gap between the top of the compost and the pot's rim so water can soak in without spilling out.



Sow annuals for fast and thrifty container colour

Annuals are a cheap way to pack colour into pots. You can sow most half-hardy and hardy annuals direct into containers in late March (or April if the weather is cold). Depending on the variety, you'll get flowers from early June through to October. Easy annuals include cosmos and sweet peas. To get a good mix in your pot, sow three types of seed in different sections.



Add a mulch

Plants will quickly grow to cover bare compost, although you can add a decorative mulch to the surface. This will instantly create a 'finished' look, stop your plants from getting muddied when you water them, deter weeds and help to retain moisture in the container.

**Get the positions right**

Place your plants loosely in the pot so you'll get an idea about how they should be positioned and to work out how many you need. The container should look quite full from the outset, but remember that plants need room to grow. Position the tallest one at the back, mid-storey plants in the middle and low-growers and trailing varieties at the front.

Watering

Pots, hanging baskets and window

boxes need daily watering during summer, sometimes twice a day in hot spells. The best time to water is in the early morning or evening, when the water won't evaporate as quickly. This job is vital for keeping your plants looking their best. Here's how to make it quicker and easier.



Add moisture-retaining granules

These are especially useful in hanging baskets and containers, which need daily watering during the summer months. Add the granules to the compost when you're planting up a container or basket to help the compost retain water.



Use a drip system

These comprise a system of small tubes and nozzles, which deliver water to individual plants or pots. You can adjust the amount of water coming from each nozzle. Group pots together to avoid covering your patio with unsightly black pipes. Thin irrigation tubes can be attached to walls, fences or pergolas to deliver water to hanging baskets.



Give each plant a pot saucer

Place a saucer under each pot to collect any water that runs out when you water the plants in summer. This will save time and water, as any excess will be absorbed by the plants' roots.



Set a timer for watering

Take the strain out of summer watering by setting up an automatic watering system. As the weather hots up, crops, bedding and newly planted subjects can suffer if they don't get enough water. An outdoor tap provides an uninterrupted supply for irrigation systems, or you can buy smaller and cheaper systems that are fed by rainwater from a water butt. Set a timer so that you know your containers are always getting enough water and save yourself time in the process.

**Use a watering can**

When you're watering containers, try using a watering can rather than a hosepipe as it gives you more accuracy in your watering, directing it straight to the roots, where it's needed.

Protection

Keep plants and crops in peak condition

by protecting them from the weather and pests. Carrying out a few simple jobs in winter will help get them through the cold months, while taking measures to prevent slugs, squirrels and birds from munching on your leaves, bulbs or precious crops can help ensure a good-looking container right through the growing season.

Protect crops and bulbs

Stop squirrels and birds from eating your bulbs and emerging seedlings by placing a piece of wire mesh over the top of your containers. This will give the plants time to get established and prevent the bigger pests feasting on young plants.



Raise pots to aid drainage

Compost in containers can become waterlogged during heavy autumn and winter rains. This happens when excess water is not taken up by the plants and can't escape through the drainage hole, especially in pots set directly on the ground. Raising them on three or four bricks, pieces of broken tile or 'pot feet' allows water to drain freely. Tilt up one side of the pot at a time, allowing you to slide each foot into place. Take care, though, when lifting heavy pots.



Use bubblewrap to insulate pots

Tender plants grown in pots, such as palms and tree ferns, need winter protection as their roots are more exposed to frost than they would be if buried in the ground. If you can't move them to a sheltered spot or a cold greenhouse, insulate the pots in bubblewrap. Terracotta and ceramic pots are prone to cracking during harsh frosts, so protect these too.



Guard against slugs

Wrap copper tape around new containers to prevent slugs and snails reaching vulnerable plants such as hostas. Slug damage can ruin the appearance of lush foliage plants, flowers and vegetables. Young seedlings, hostas, dahlias and peas get eaten regularly, which can make them difficult to grow in areas where slugs are common. Copper tape is thin, easy to cut and simple to apply. You could also try growing a range of slug-proof plants, such as Rodgersia and Brunnera.

Bring pots under cover

Move pot-grown tender plants under cover in winter. Plants such as oleander, tender fuchsias, pelargoniums and succulents need protection from the cold and wet. Even unheated greenhouses will protect plants from severe weather. Check for pests before bringing them in. Plants grow little over winter, so water sparingly every few weeks to stop the roots drying out.



Where to buy

You'll find many of the plants listed in this container guide at any good nursery or garden centre, but this handy suppliers' list will help you source any unusual cultivars as well as interesting pots

POTS

FIBRECLAY POTS

(including faux lead)

The Pot Company

01892 890 353, thepotco.com

Woodlodge woodlodge.co.uk
(for your nearest stockist)

GLAZED POTS

Apta

01233 621 090, apta.co.uk

(for your nearest stockist)

The Pot Company

01892 890 353, thepotco.com

Woodlodge

woodlodge.co.uk (for your
nearest stockist)

METAL POTS

(including galvanised, zinc,
recycled and contemporary)

Primrose

01189 035 210, primrose.co.uk

Etsy (recycled pots)

etsy.com

Garden Brocante

0118 940 2967, facebook.com/
gardenbrocante/

PLASTIC POTS

(including terracotta
lookalikes)

The Garden Superstore

01903 258 200,
thegardensuperstore.co.uk

Webbs

01527 860 000,
webbsdirect.co.uk

STONE POTS

(including reconstituted stone)

Haddonstone

01604 770 711,
haddonstone.com/en-gb

The Pot Company

01892 890 353, thepotco.com

TorStone

www.torstone.com

TERRACOTTA POTS

Apta

01233 621 090, apta.co.uk (for
your nearest stockist)

Pots and Pithoi

01342 714 793,
potsandpithoi.com

The Pot Company

01892 890 353, thepotco.com

Whichford Pottery

01608 684 416,
whichfordpottery.com

Woodlodge

woodlodge.co.uk (for your
nearest stockist)

TERRAZZO POTS

(including resin-bonded pots)

Flora Select

01245 422 353, floraselect.net

Woodlodge

woodlodge.co.uk (for your
nearest stockist)

WOOD POTS

Barrel & Garden

07526 812 713, oak-barrel.com

Greenfingers 01506 605 157,
greenfingers.com

Primrose

01189 035 210, primrose.co.uk

SEEDS

Chiltern Seeds

01491 824 675,
chilternseeds.co.uk

Dobies

0333 240 5933,
dobies.co.uk

Marshall's

01480 774 555,
marshallsgarden.com

Fothergill's

0333 777 3936,
mr-fothergills.co.uk

Sarah Raven

0345 092 0283,
sarahraven.com

Suttons Seeds

0333 043 0700, suttons.co.uk

Thompson & Morgan

0333 400 0033,
thompson-morgan.com

BULBS

Avon Bulbs

07425 833906,
avonbulbs.co.uk

Bloms Bulbs

01234 709 099,
blomsbulbs.com

Gee Tee

01205 260 412, gee-tee.co.uk

J Parkers

0161 848 1100, jparkers.co.uk

Peter Nyssen

0161 747 4000,
peternyssen.com

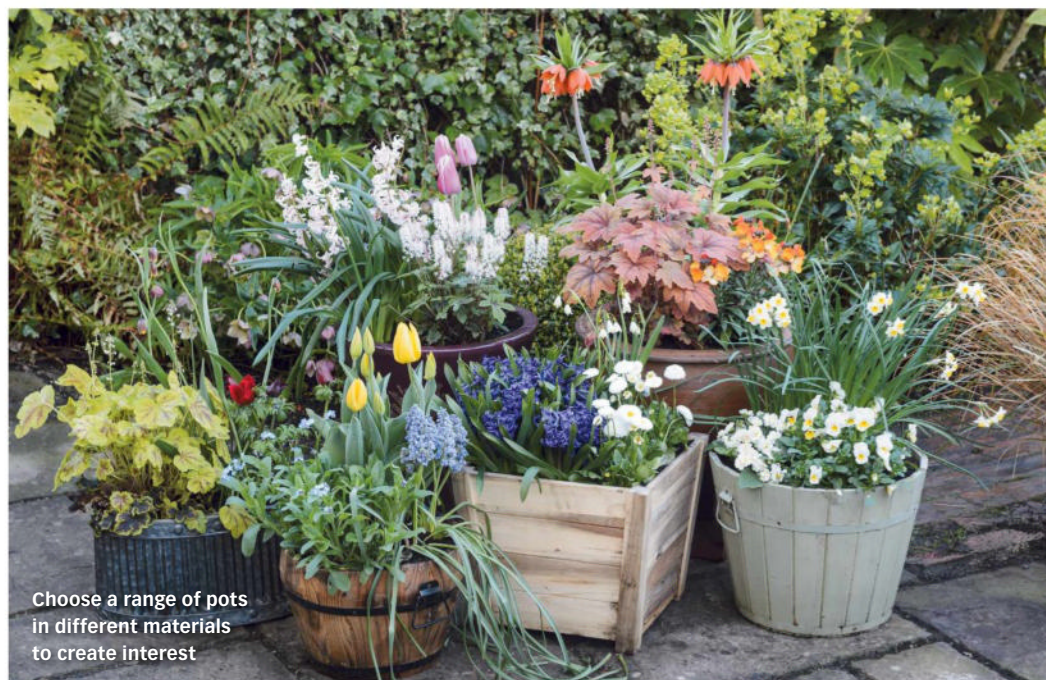
Van Meuwen

0333 400 0022,
vanmeuwen.com

PLANTS

You'll find the majority of plants used in *Creative containers* at most good garden centres.

For great value seasonal plant offers, especially for *Gardeners' World* readers, visit GardenersWorld.com/garden-offers



Choose a range of pots in different materials to create interest

Index

A

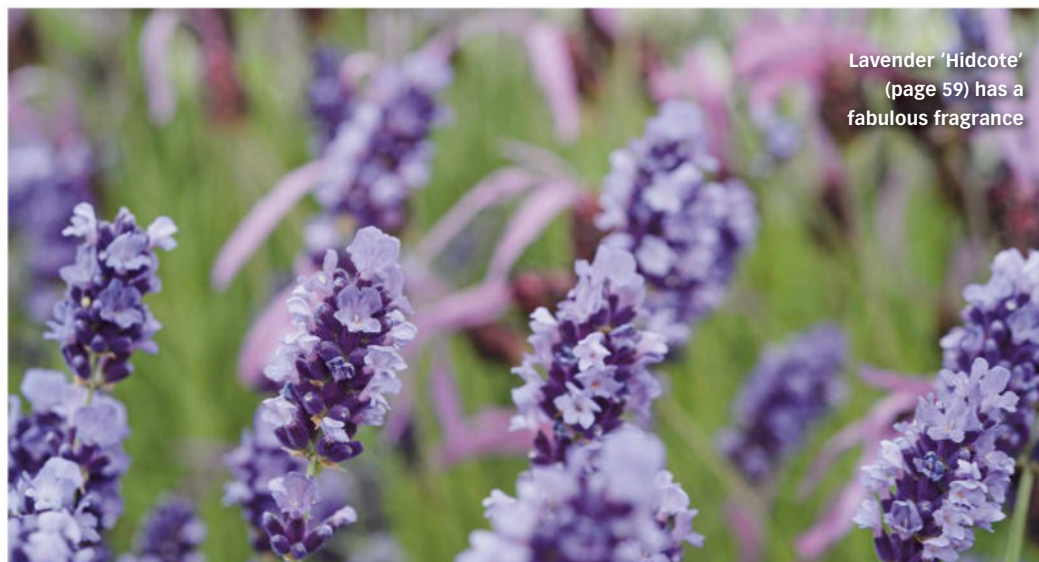
Achillea 66
Ajuga reptans 22, 84
Acorus gramineus 31
Alchemilla mollis 57
Alstroemeria 79
Anemone 36, 79
 Annuals, sowing 122
Argyranthemum 58, 63
Artemisia 52
Arum italicum 28
 Asparagus peas 117
Aspidistra elatior 89
Asplenium scolopendrium 84
 Aster 64
 Automatic watering system 124
 Autumn plants 74-89

B

Bacopa 46
 Basil 113, 115
 Beetroot 115
Begonia 45, 58
 Bellis 30
Bergenia 101
Bidens 42, 71, 73
Briza maxima 69
 Broad beans 116
Brunnera macrophylla 22
 Bulbs, planting 16
 Busy lizzie 51, 53

C

Calibrachoa 49, 58, 71
Calceolaria 19
Calocephalus brownii 81, 89, 91
Callicarpa bodinieri 78
 Campanula 26, 52, 69
 Canna 51
Carex 36, 55, 59, 74, 82, 85, 86, 88, 95, 96, 99, 104
 Carrots 111
Centranthus ruber 66
Chamaecyparis obtusa 101
 Chard 118
 Chillies 104, 110, 112
 Clematis 63
 Coleus 62, 71
 Compost 121
 Container protection 126-127
 Containers, how to plant 76
 Containers, care of 120-127
 Containers, types of and drainage 121-123



Lavender 'Hidcote' (page 59) has a fabulous fragrance

Coprosma repens 99
 Cordyline 79, 104
 Coriander 115
Cornus 88, 96, 100, 105
Corokia x virgata 101
Corydalis flexuosa 34
Cosmos 42,, 73
Crocsmia 68
 Crocus 35
Cryptomium fortunei 95
Cyclamen 80, 81, 83, 89, 95, 96, 98, 103

D

Dahlia 42, 48
Dianthus 24, 53, 72
Dianthus (pinks) 41, 65
 Diascia 56
Digitalis x mertonensis (foxglove) 69
 Drip system 124
Dryopteris affinis 83

E

Echeveria 55
Elymus magellanicus 71
Emilia sonchifolia javanica 112
Epimedium grandiflorum 22
Eranthis hyemalis 99
Erigeron karvinskianus 72
Erysimum (wallflowers) 18, 19, 27, 34, 64
Eucalyptus pulverulenta 52
Euonymus fortunei 25, 101
Euphorbia 18, 27, 33, 49, 64, 67, 71, 77, 95, 105

F

Felicia amelloides 46
 Fern 35
 Fertiliser 122
Festuca glauca 45, 77

Forget-me-not 32, 33
 Foxglove (*digitalis*) 69
 French beans 108, 109
 Fuchsia 50, 53

G

Galanthus (snowdrops) 103
Gaultheria procumbens 94, 102
Gentiana 89
Geranium 47, 55, 56, 57, 64, 89
 Geum 66
Glandularia 48

H

Hakonechloa macra 55
Hamamelis intermedia 98
 Hanging baskets 26, 44, 45, 56, 58, 63
 Hanging baskets, planting 44
 Heather 77, 80, 81, 84
Hedera helix 26, 78, 102
Helichrysum 39, 54, 73
 Hellebore 26, 64, 91, 97, 103, 104
Hesperantha coccinea 64
Heuchera 24, 27, 78, 81, 82, 83, 87, 96, 104
 Holly 94
Hordeum jubatum 66
 Hosta 22
Houttuynia cordata 55
 Hyacinth 17, 24, 30
Hydrangea macrophylla 83

I

Impatiens 46
Imperata cylindrica 87
 Iris 28
Isotoma axillaris 48
 Ivy 33, 34, 65, 93, 94, 97, 98, 102

J

Jacobaea maritima 52

K

Kale 93, 117, 118

L

Lantana 73
 Lavender 47, 54, 59, 60, 61
 Lettuce 87, 108, 109, 115
Leucojum aestivum 30
Linaria purpurea 66
 Lobelia 3, 46
Lophospermum 49, 63
Lotus berthelotii 45
Lysimachia nummularia 22

M

Mahonia 104
 Marigolds 113
 Mexican feather grass 25
 Mint 114
 Muscari 25, 32, 34, 37, 38

N

Nandina 77
 Narcissus 14, 18, 26, 28, 29, 34, 35, 37
 Nasturtium 42
 Nemesis 50, 71
 Nepeta 47, 55
 Nicotiana 48, 61, 62

O

Ophiopogon planiscapus 18, 55, 81
Orlaya grandiflora 69
 Osmanthus 97

P

Pak choi 117
Panicum virgatum 52

Pansy 25, 59, 78, 82, 84, 87, 88, 93
 Parsley 115
 Pelargonium (geranium) 3, 49, 56, 63, 67, 71, 110
 Pennisetum 78
Penstemon glaucum 57, 68
 Pests, protection from 126
 Petchoa 51
 Petunia 3, 54, 56
Parahebe catarractae 89
 Phlox 39
 Phormium 42, 80, 82, 102, 105
Photinia x fraseri 87, 93
Pieris japonica 95
Pinus sylvestris 103
Pittosporum tenuifolium 99
Plectranthus argentatus 67
 Podocarpus 103
Polemonium reptans 47
 Polyanthus 34
Polystichum 78, 83
 Primula 18, 19, 21, 22, 29, 36
 Pyracantha 74

R
 Radish 110
 Ranunculus 20, 21, 26, 36
 Red orach 71
 Rose 61, 72
 Rosemary 28, 39, 65, 118
 Rudbeckia 62, 68
 Runner beans 111

S
 Sage 50, 118
Salvia greggii 67
Salvia nemorosa 47, 48, 60, 66
Salvia officinalis 22
Sambucus nigra 64
Saxifraga umbrosa 20, 22, 36, 39
 Scabiosa 60
Scleranthus biflorus 39
 Sedum 80, 86
 Sempervivum 39

Senecio cineraria 37, 89
 Skimmia 24, 34, 81, 93, 94, 100, 104
 Slugs, protection from 126
 Snowdrops 99, 103
Solanum capsicastrum (winter cherry) 74, 82, 88, 91
Solanum rantonnetii 46
Solenostemon 51
 Spinach 108, 109
 Spring plants 14-39
Stipa arundacea 68
Stipa tenuissima 20
 Strawberries 107
 Summer plants 42-73

T
 Tagetes 73
 Thyme 19, 24, 28, 39, 52, 85, 99
 Tiarella 17
 Tithonia 112
 Tomatoes 113
Tulbaghia violacea 71
 Tulip 14, 17, 32

U
Ugni molinae 118
Uncinia rubra 103, 104

V
 Veg, how to plant 108
 Verbena 42, 54, 56
Viburnum tinus 35
 Vinca minor 31, 99
 Viola 18, 21, 22, 26, 29, 31, 39, 69, 72, 74, 85, 86, 104

W
 Wallflower 33
 Watering 44, 124, 125
 Window boxes 92
 Winter plants 90-105
 Winter protection 126

Z
 Zinnia 73



Skimmia japonica
 (page 93) makes a
 perfect autumn pot

Gardeners' World magazine GUIDE

Creative containers

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PHONE

Subscription enquiries: 03330 162123

Editorial enquiries: 020 7150 5770 (not a garden advisory service)
 For practical gardening advice, log on to GardenersWorld.com

CREATIVE CONTAINERS

Editor Tamsin Hope Thomson

Designer Bonnie Bryan

Sub-editor Becky Warren-Smith

Photographers Marsha Arnold, Sarah Cuttle, Paul Debois, Neil Hepworth, Jason Ingram, Torie Chugg

Projects by Louise Curley, David Hurron, Sally Nex, Helen Riches, Kevin Smith

FOR BBC GARDENERS' WORLD MAGAZINE

Content Director Kevin Smith

Head of Operations Gregor Shepherd

Chief Sub Editor John Perkins

Art Director Jo Cloke

Picture Editor Sarah Edwards

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Head of Clients Tim Bennett

Brand Manager Emma Davis

Production Director Koli Pickersgill

Production Manager Joanne Beattie

Advertising enquiries: tim.bennett@immediate.co.uk

Content syndication enquiries: tim.hudson@immediate.co.uk

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